This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07480520 5

A STEP ASIDE

Charlotte Dunning

fiction (American)

A STEP ASIDE

BY

CHARLOTTE DUNNING

AUTHOR OF

"UPON A CAST," AND "CABIN AND GONDOLA"

'Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human."

NEW YORK

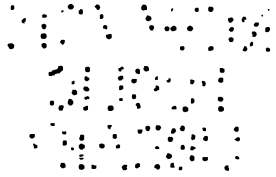
R. F. FENNO & COMPANY

9 AND 11 EAST 16TH STREET

327431

Copyright, 1886,
By HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

All rights reserved.



A STEP ASIDE.

I.

THE painting lesson was over, and a bevy of girls fluttered out of the studio, each bowing to the teacher, who held open the door and returned the salutes mechanically. After the rustle of petticoats had died away, he gave a parting glance at the plaster casts, the charcoal drawings, the ambitious studies in oils, then, with a sigh of relief, closed the studio door and walked down the corridor. He met a maid-servant whom he bade ask Madame Kenyon if she could see him for a few minutes, and although the English words came readily to his lips, the Frenchman was betrayed in the Madame. The maid hurried off and returned to nod and lead him to a little room, half parlor, half office, where a stout dame with gray hair sat at a desk, writing a letter.

"Ah, Monsieur Valrey," she said, smiling upon him over her shoulder, "you have come just in time for a cup of tea with me. Pray be seated, and pardon me if I finish this letter before we begin our conversation."

"Do not let me disturb you, Madame Kenyon,"

TRANSFER FROM C.C. NOV. 1931

said Monsieur, in a voice that sounded very deep after her light, silvery accent. The mistress of the fashionable school turned back to her letter-writing, while her teacher of drawing and painting crossed the room and seated himself by a window that looked out on Fifth Avenue. Streams of carriages flowed to and from the Park, languid ladies lying back on the cushions, haughty coachmen sitting bolt upright, high-stepping horses clanking silver chains. Monsieur Valrey regarded the show of wealth and fashion with apathy, not envy. The rich people of New York were nothing to him; he no longer even despised them. He was a tall, spare man, whose eyebrows were just touched with gray, although his hair had grown quite white. His face was shaved clean, so that the deep lines showed plainly, but failure and sorrow had aged him more than years, for in spite of his wrinkles and white hair he was not yet sixty. At thirty he had married and brought his wife to New York, hoping to win the fame and fortune denied him in France, and he won neither. Still, he struggled along gayly for a while, believing that the rich Americans must sooner or later buy his pictures, give him orders, heap wealth and honor upon him; but the rich Americans ignored his very existence, and poor Paul Valrey drank the cup of disappointment to the dregs before the cup of poverty was forced to his lips. Finally, when his little stock of money had dwindled down to a handful of dollars, his wife bore him a child,

and the doctor who attended her let Valrey paint his portrait in payment for professional services. The portrait was excellent and brought him a few orders, and he managed to keep a loaf in the cupboard, but at last he was glad to eke out a living by teaching. He had neither reputation nor influential friends to back him, and for a long time it was a hard struggle to get pupils, but in the course of ten or twelve years he achieved some measure of fame as a teacher of drawing and painting. His appearance and manners helped him; he was a gentleman, and although stern, he was not irascible; mothers could depend upon him not to make love to their daughters or box their sons' ears, and a French drawing master is apt to be a trifle too gallant and far too hasty-tempered. He made a decent livelihood, but to a man who thinks he has a spark of genius in him, who is sure that his work which is passed over is better than that which catches the eye of the world, above all, to a man who loves his art, it is hard to teach young ladies and gentlemen to whom painting is a mere amusement, fit for an idle hour. Valrey, however, had gone so near the brink of poverty — the poverty that lacks bread to eat and clothes to put on — that he rejoiced to be able to keep wife and child in comfort, even at the cost of painful drudgery. He was sought as a teacher; the heads of schools vied with each other to secure his services, and he saw himself growing prosperous and laying by some-

thing for the future, — he was becoming almost resigned to his fate — when his wife died. Then Valrey laid down brushes and palette in despair. His daughter, who was sixteen then, was dear to him indeed, but it was the wife who had fanned his fainting hopes and encouraged him to believe that the world would some day recognize and reward his talent. After she had gone from him, the loving, helpful woman, he sank into a machine; he gave lessons, he painted a portrait now and then, and while he did his work well, it was without enthusiasm. He taught his daughter to draw and paint, although she did not inherit his taste or talent; he had her read and speak French with him; he educated her as well as he could, and Pauline Valrey grew up in the belief that all there was for her to do in life was to teach, and accepted her calling without dreaming of adopting any other.

When she was almost twenty he succeeded in getting her a position in Madam Kenyon's famous school for young ladies, where he had given lessons for several years, and she began with teaching the rudiments of French and taking charge of the youngest drawing pupils. It was of her that he wished to speak to Madam Kenyon, and when the note had been written and the tea brought in, he broached the subject delicately. Pauline had been two months in the school and he wanted to know whether she gave satisfaction; he knew Madam Kenyon too well to think that

she would keep a teacher for any sentimental reason.

"Mademoiselle Valrey has the gift of instruction," said Madam Kenyon, promptly. "I have been watching her closely since she came, and I am convinced that as she grows older she will develop into a teacher whose services will be very valuable. Moreover, Monsieur, she has such charming manners that she subdues my wild Western girls by sheer gentleness, and I hope they will take pattern by her. It is quite useless, you know, to preach manners; it is only by example that a hoyden can be trained. And my teachers must be able to do something more than correct exercises and hear recitations; they must help me to refine, Monsieur. I do not claim to send out learned women as Vassar or Girton do, but when a young lady has been with me three or four years, I expect her to conduct herself properly in a drawing-room or at a dinner-table, to speak low and use good English, to dress suitably and word a note neatly. It is harder to teach all this than to teach Greek or astronomy."

Monsieur Valrey bowed; he had heard these remarks many times before and he only murmured, —

"It is indeed, Madame, far more difficult."

He had drunk the tea, which he abhorred, and he looked at the fragile, painted cup in silence for a minute; then he said, —

"I hope you will be a friend to my daughter al-

ways. She may need a friend any day, and you may need a new painting teacher."

"Oh, no, no," Madam Kenyon exclaimed. She knew Valrey's history; she both respected and pitied him.

He shook his head and smiled. "I have not been quite well lately, and the doctor tells me that I have a heart trouble which is likely to end in sudden death. Perhaps I shall live years, perhaps only weeks. I must beg you to regard this as confidential; my daughter does not suspect it."

He rose and Madam held out her hand to him.

"I shall always be a friend to your daughter," she said. "You may depend on me."

"Thank you. I thought it was my duty to tell you. Monsieur Dupont could take my place at any time, and he is a good teacher. The assurance of your regard for my daughter's welfare is a great comfort to me, and I hope she will make herself useful to you in your work."

He bowed and left Madam Kenyon standing in the middle of the room. She frowned and shuddered.

"I hope he does n't die while he is giving a lesson here," she said. "The effect on the girls would be terrible. As for Monsieur Dupont, I would not have him in the house."

Then, with a troubled face, she went back to her letter-writing.

Valrey found his daughter in the school-room, waiting for him. She helped him on with his

great coat; she brushed a speck off his shoulder; she gave him his hat and stick, and they went out together to the bustling Avenue, and walked towards the Park. She was like him, tall and slight; it was from her mother that she had inherited delicate features, a fine-grained, white skin, and bright brown hair and eyes. She could have sat to the most fastidious of painters for a portrait of a lady, but no painter could catch the charm of her smile, accompanied as it often was by a faint flush in her cheeks that faded while one was wondering what had lit up the pale face. She looked somewhat older than her years; she had been trained in a school that makes a girl of twenty a woman. Her mother had taught her to use a needle deftly, and she could fashion a dress or trim a bonnet to accord well with her face and figure; she had a true Frenchwoman's knack of putting a bit of lace around her neck or tying a ribbon at her throat. For her father, she cared in a sort of maternal way, looking after his clothes and scolding him gently about his collars, and she honored him as she loved him, and since her mother's death she had hardly had a companion save him. He was always undemonstrative, sometimes severe towards her, but she knew that she was all that kept his heart beating in his bosom.

She guessed he had spoken to Madam Kenyon about her, and finally she said: —

"Nothing has gone wrong, papa; Madame has

no fault to find with me? I saw the tea taken into the parlor, and I knew that you would have to drink a cup."

She pressed closer to him and smiled up in his face roguishly.

"Afternoon tea is part of the course, you know," she added. Her keen eyes had seen through all the fashionable school-teacher's pretenses to elegance, and Madam Kenyon would have felt a trifle uncomfortable had she suspected how her youngest teacher regarded the famous refining institution. Monsieur Valrey, however, had no sense of humor to help him bear the ills of life, and he answered gravely: —

"Yes, we had the tea; women seem to like such things. Madame did not find fault with you, but you must try to give satisfaction, for she pays her teachers well, and she cannot afford to have poor ones; she has a great name to keep up. You will be able to earn a good living if you are patient and industrious."

It was a dull path he pointed out to her, but she had grown used to thinking it the only path her feet could ever tread. Most girls of her age look and long for the lover who is to rescue them from poverty, from unpleasant homes, from worry and care and trouble, and when a young man is introduced and begs the favor of a waltz, they wonder if this indeed be He. Dreams, Pauline had indulged in, but not such dreams. Her favorite was this: A man who had traveled, and who

knew all about pictures, was to find his way to the little third floor room in their boarding-house that her father used as a studio. He would see the paintings there and cry out in wonder. "They are masterpieces," she heard him say. "They are works of genius. Monsieur, permit me to send some of my friends to view these pictures, but they must be exhibited; they cannot hang here in obscurity."

And then his friends would come and buy the pictures, and Papa Valrey would be sought after; orders would flow in from all parts of the world, and he and Pauline could go back to France. She never got beyond this. France meant heaven, the beautiful France that her father loved, but which she had never seen. It vexed her to remember that New York was her birthplace, and she would not confess it unless the question were asked point-blank; she was pleased when some one discovered a French accent in her English speech.

She and her father talked but little as they made their way up the Avenue, for it was a raw, blustering November day, and the wind blew the dust hither and thither in clouds, seeming to take a malicious delight in whirling a handful against a girl's face. Pauline's wisp of a veil hardly came to her nose, and she pressed her lips close together as she hurried along at her father's side. When they reached the Park, they got into a belt-line car, which in its round on the edge of the town

would carry them to that unfashionable quarter of New York that lies near the East River. They had boarded for several years with the widow Terry, whose house was one of a score called Harloe Row, in a street not far from Beekman Place. It is a quiet spot, given over to modest dwellings, and in the river just beyond lies Blackwell's Island with its great gray buildings. The Avenue about here is lined with vulgar little shops, and the owners, not a few of whom are Germans, lounge in the doorways, lightly clad in only shirt and trousers when the weather is warm, while their wives sit by the opened windows above, and are on the alert to speak harsh words to the children playing on the sidewalk. A groggery with a group of idlers about it, or a butcher shop with carcasses of calves and pigs suspended in the windows to tempt a feeble appetite, is on every corner. Up and down jingle the eternal horse-cars, and great drays rumble over the stone pavement from daybreak to dark. The very policemen have caught something of the bedraggled look of the neighborhood, and seem far away cousins to the neat, white-gloved wearers of the uniform, who pilot ladies through the throng of carriages below Madison Square. And Madison Square is nearly as foreign to the people of First Avenue as Mayfair or the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

In Harloe Row, just around the corner, noise and squalor give way to peace and decency, and the people who dwell in the neat brick houses

hold their heads rather high when they cross the Avenue. Mrs. Terry, with whom the Valreys boarded, was a widow, who, if she had not seen better days, had at least never seen any worse ones, and prided herself somewhat on her gentility, which to the outward eye consisted chiefly in going to church dressed in black silk. Her house was too small to accommodate many boarders, and she was very particular about those whom she fed and lodged. She could go to bed soothed by a sense of perfect security and unimpeachable decorum, sure that no roistering clerk would stumble up her narrow staircase after midnight. The Valreys occupied three tiny rooms on the third floor, and on the second were the Kanes, a sedate, elderly floor-walker and his bed-ridden wife. There was room for one more boarder, and Mr. Kane had spoken about a young man of his acquaintance who would be glad to become a member of the family; but Mrs. Terry did not like the idea of a young man, although she finally consented to receive this one on trial for a fortnight.

"Mind you," she said, "if I smell whiskey about him, out he goes. I won't have any cigarette smoking, beer-drinking boys in my house."

"He has been well brought up," Mr. Kane returned, "he is a clergyman's son."

"*They* are always scamps," cried Mrs. Terry.

It may be added just here that the late Mr. Terry had not been sober for a month before death cut him down in the bloom of manhood.

This young man, this clergyman's son, who was to be taken on trial for a fortnight, happened to be in the dingy car that carried the Valreys homeward that November day, and he eyed them with respectful interest when they took their places near him. He had no idea who they were, nor did they suspect he was the would-be boarder whose history they had learned something of from Mr. Kane. As the car filled, Pauline was pushed nearer to him, and at last she was pressed so close to his side that when a gust of wind blew in the half-opened window behind them, a lock of her hair escaped and brushed across his cheek. His dark, thin face flushed painfully, and he shrank together so that she could raise her hand to fasten the straying lock beneath her veil again. He was very young. He had eager, inquiring gray eyes, shaded by lashes as black as his hair, and a virgin mustache was beginning to show above a mouth that was as pure and sensitive as Pauline's. As for her, although she hardly looked at him, she noticed his slender hands; she noticed, too, that the binding of his coat was worn off at the wrists; she saw the patches on his shoes; nothing escaped her tranquil glance, not even his frayed collar and cuffs. She recognized in him a poor gentleman, and as she sat there beside him, her eyes fixed just above the bleared face of an old man opposite, she mentally trimmed the frayed collar and cuffs, she fastened a button that hung on by the eyelids, she mended the shabby coat,

wondering if he had no mother or sister or wife to perform these little services for him.

When the car stopped to let her and her father alight, the young man alighted too, and followed them up the street to Harloe Row, even to the widow Terry's door. There Monsieur Valrey turned to look sharply at him, and taking off his hat, the young man said, his face reddening again, —

"This is Mrs. Terry's house, unless I have made a mistake in the number. I am coming here to board. You may have heard Mr. Kane speak of me — Langmuir is my name, Hugh Langmuir."

His eyes met Pauline's with wistful entreaty, and she smiled a little. So she and he came face to face for the first time, and in the minute that they stood on the doorstep, their hearts went out to each other in sympathy. They were both poor, both young, and to both the beckoning future held forth vague promises.

II.

ALTHOUGH Hugh Langmuir did not suspect that he was on trial, he comported himself so well that Mrs. Terry concluded that she could safely keep him. He was seen only at the table, and he spoke merely to answer a question; his evenings he spent in his own room. One day, as he entered the dining-room where the household was assembled for the six o'clock dinner, the door-knob came off in his hand, and he looked at Mrs. Terry in the silent dismay of a child who has broken a tumbler and expects a sharp reproof.

"There!" cried Mrs. Terry, "I have told the locksmith a dozen times to fix that knob on so as it would stay, but he always forgets it."

"Oh, I can fasten it on so that it will stay," said Hugh, gathering up the screws from the floor. "My mother thinks I ought to be a mechanic; I like to tinker. If you want me to feel quite at home, Mrs. Terry, you must let me hammer a little now and then."

"Gracious," said Mrs. Terry, with a fat laugh, "hammer as much as you please."

It was the first time he had ever spoken of himself or of his people, and the door-knob seemed to have broken the ice. He took his place at

table, which was next to Mr. Kane and opposite Pauline, and presently he told about a bewildered country woman who had come up in the elevated car with him that evening, and he made a droll story out of very slight material. Papa Valrey and Pauline smiled, but Mrs. Terry and Mr. Kane laughed heartily, while Hugh looked from face to face with unmoved countenance, only his twinkling eyes betraying how he enjoyed his little triumph.

"The first week that I was in New York," he said, confidentially, "I was mortally afraid that somebody might suspect how green and country I was, and I always walked very fast to nowhere in particular, though I was forever getting lost. In the course of a month I began to think that I had a metropolitan air, and I plucked up sufficient courage to have my boots blacked by an imp down town. He rubbed hard for a while; then he cocked his head, looked up in my face, and said, grinning like an ape, 'Tell you, mister, it ain't easy to git a shine on to boots that the country mud sticks to yet.' The worst of it was, I blushed in shame and the imp saw it."

There was another laugh, but Pauline sighed wistfully, —

"I wish there was country mud on my boots. I wonder what the world is like outside of New York."

"Ah," cried Hugh, "and I was always wondering what the world was like outside of my village."

He did not go up to his room directly after dinner as he had been wont to do; he lingered awhile in the parlor where Mrs. Terry and the Valreys spent the evenings. It was a hideous little room, with a green and red carpet, and staring white walls. The pictures were mostly photographs of the Terry family, encased in shiny black frames. There was some artistic wax-work, — a cross with a wreath of flowers, standing on a bracket in the corner, and beneath it a little marble-topped table held ghastly water-lilies, which were protected from the dust by a glass shade. What saved the room from being a nightmare was the large table in the middle, covered with a cheerful crimson cloth. The green rep arm-chairs had a well-worn, comfortable look, too; and when Mrs. Terry and Pauline sat sewing by the drop-light, and Papa Valrey, who always turned his back to them so that the light came over his left shoulder, and always explained and apologized, sat near with a newspaper, the little group looked pleasant and homelike to the lonesome boy.

"Sit down," said Mrs. Terry who saw his irresolute yet longing glance, "sit down. That old chair by the window will suit you, I guess, though it is rather shaky. You can tinker that some time if you want to."

He tried it cautiously, then drew it up to the group and read a newspaper with infinite contentment.

Hugh was the oldest son of a clergyman who

had been too poor to marry until he was past forty, and the parish he served in a village in northern New York gave him a salary which just enabled him to live and to educate his children. It was a bitter disappointment to him when Hugh left college at the end of his freshman year and declared that he would be no poor parson or lawyer or doctor. The boy was ambitious to gain wealth, and as the first step he entered the village store, kept by an old bachelor cousin, who had managed by dint of hard work to build up a large country trade and lay by a considerable fortune. He liked Hugh; he expressed the hope that Hugh might step into his shoes some day, but the boy scorned the idea of dying a mere country storekeeper. He stayed in the village, weighing out groceries and measuring off calicoes, until he was twenty-one, and then with a hundred dollars and a letter of introduction in his pocket, he came to New York. The letter of introduction to the head of the firm that supplied his cousin with teas and coffees and spices availed him little, and it was only after weeks of weary search that he managed to get a place in the office of The Essex Manufacturing Company. He worked so well that he rose to a position which brought him a salary of fifty dollars a month, and it was on that he fed and clothed himself. Although he had never known many of the luxuries of life, the parsonage was a home ruled by a gentle mother, and Hugh's year in cheap boarding-houses had been a terrible

experience. He was too proud to make friends quickly, too fastidious to care for coarse pleasures, and he had led a hand-to-mouth existence among people whose speech and manners irritated him, and from whose good-humored advances he shrank in disgust. The sight of the little group around the drop-light in Mrs. Terry's parlor was like a glimpse of heaven to him, and as he pretended to read, he looked often towards Pauline, who sewed industriously, conscious that the young man's eyes were upon her, but never meeting his shy glances.

Monsieur Valrey laid down his newspaper and took off his spectacles.

"I see that Mr. Melrose has got possession of the New York and San Francisco Railroad," he remarked in a way that invited response.

The doings of the rich Americans could still astonish him a little. Monsieur Valrey was heart and soul a Frenchman; he had not become a citizen of the United States in any sense of the word; and if somebody had stopped him suddenly in the street and asked where his home was, he would probably have replied Blois, his native town, that he had not seen for thirty years and more. He cherished a vague idea of going back there one of these days; New York was merely a sojourning place.

Hugh lowered his newspaper too, and said with eager, boyish promptness, —

"Yes, Melrose is a wonderful man, a genius in his way. He used to live up in our part of the

country and my father remembers him as a barefoot boy. He always vowed he would be rich."

"Many a man has vowed that, Mr. Langmuir. To me, such an ambition is not the most noble."

Hugh's face flushed. He wondered whether the grave old Frenchman had read his thoughts at that moment. It was his ambition to be rich, and he found nothing ignoble in it. Of course a rich man must use his wealth aright, and Hugh saw himself building hospitals and endowing colleges.

"Mr. Kane comes from your part of the country, too," broke in Mrs. Terry. "Perhaps he vowed he would be rich, but he ain't, though he is as good and hard-working a man as ever lived — better than Mr. Melrose, I guess, for from all I hear, Mr. Melrose ain't particular how he gits money as long as he gits it. My, what a house he is putting up on Fifth Avenue! They say all the door-knobs are to be gold, with some kind of jewel in 'em."

"If one of those came off in my hand I would keep it," said Hugh.

Mrs. Terry sniffed. "A lot you would," she returned in slangy scorn.

"How is Mrs. Kane to-day?" Pauline asked the landlady.

"Oh, she is pretty bad; she is a great sufferer. It is a comfort she is so fond of reading, for her husband can't be with her all the time, though he is the most devoted man I ever saw. There 's hardly an evening but what he brings her home a

book. Lucky they 're cheap nowadays. She 's got a stack of 'em that high."

Mrs. Terry held up her hand as high as she could and looked severely at Hugh.

"Mrs. Kane used to teach school before her marriage," he said. "I never knew her, but my mother did. The Kanes are old friends, though; they came to our church. When I was a little chap I used to like to go to the Kane farm. I always got a big mug of milk and a thick piece of cake. It is a lovely farm" —

He broke off, thinking his hearers would not be interested in the reminiscences of his boyhood, but Pauline had laid down her work and was looking at him fixedly.

"Go on," she said, imperiously. "Tell us about it. There were great fields and herds of cows and sheep and — and" —

"And a wide creek running through the fields," Hugh added, coming to her rescue as she faltered in her catalogue of rustic delights, "and we boys caught sunfish and went swimming. The current was very strong and once Jimmy Kane" —

Encouraged by her eyes, he talked about his home and the people there. Papa Valrey asked a question, and then the old gentleman began to talk about his boyhood; he had lived in the country too, and they contrasted rural France with rural America, each happy to give the other a little information, while the ladies sat by listening, sometimes making inconsequent, feminine

comments. When ten o'clock struck, everybody was surprised. Could it be so late?

"You have helped to make our evening pass pleasantly, Mr. Langmuir," said Papa Valrey. "I hope you will give us the honor of your company again."

Hugh stammered out something in response to this rather stately speech, and ran up to his tiny bedroom on the third floor, his heart lighter than it had been in months. He was conscious of a vague excitement; his brain was full of tumultuous thoughts that stirred his blood and sent him pacing up and down the little space between the narrow bed and the wall. Quick smiles and incoherent words sprang to his lips, but he stopped in his nervous walk when he heard footsteps on the staircase.

"*Bonne nuit, papa,*" said Pauline in the hall. In the pause that followed, Hugh imagined rather than heard the soft kiss; then came Monsieur Valrey's deep voice.

"*Bonne nuit, ma fille.*"

Doors closed gently, and after that reigned a silence so deep that Hugh held his breath.

"*Bonne nuit,*" he repeated, in a sort of ecstasy.

He guessed what the soft words meant, and they sounded sweeter than ever words had in his ears. The clean white bed invited him to sleep, but his gray eyes turned from the pillow impatiently. He drew a chair up to the little table, which was covered with a spotless towel, and wrote this letter: —

NEW YORK, *November* 20, 188–.

MY DEAR MOTHER, —

As I told you in my last letter, I left my boarding place in disgust, and John Kane brought me here, where he and his wife have lived for several years. The house is kept by a Mrs. Terry, and I hope I shall be able to stay, but my room is half promised to somebody. I pay no more than I did in Mrs. Ruyter's vile rookery, and everything is clean and comfortable and homelike. Besides the Kanes, there are only two boarders, an old French gentleman, a teacher of drawing and painting, named Valrey, and his daughter. They are charming people. I always thought French people laughed and gesticulated and shrugged their shoulders continually, but Mr. Valrey is very grave and dignified. As for Mrs. Terry, she is a kind soul, but not a lady like Miss Valrey, and she sewed a button on my vest the other day, which is more than anybody has done for me since I left home. I am afraid my letters have been pretty homesick, but if I can stay here I know that I shall be contented. It is growing late, so I will go to bed now. Give my love to father and Mollie.

Your affectionate son, HUGH.

The next morning Mrs. Terry said to Monsieur Valrey, while they were waiting for breakfast, —

"I have always been dead set against young men, but I guess Mr. Langmuir might as well stay."

She looked at the old Frenchman anxiously; she had the highest regard for his opinion.

"He is a gentleman," said Monsieur, as though that ended the matter.

"Oh my, yes; you can see that he has been well brought up. He come out wonderfully last night, did n't he? I guess he has been homesick and forlorn; he ain't used to living in town, neither, and I suppose country folks have their heads turned by all the noise and confusion."

Pauline came in just in time to hear her father repeat, "He is a gentleman."

She turned away, smiling, but as she stood by the window, her attitude was expectant, and she put her head a little on one side, like a listening bird. Mrs. Terry said in a tone of satisfaction,—

"Well, that settles it. I took a fancy to him right off, and the other day he caught me sewing a button on his vest, and he thanked me as though I had done him the greatest favor in the world. Says he, 'My mother and sister used to look after my buttons at home, but since I came to New York, I have had to sew 'em on myself, and I ain't so handy with a needle as I am with a hammer or a chisel.' And he said it in such a sweet way!"

"Poor boy," murmured Pauline; and then Hugh entered with Mr. Kane, and the family sat down to breakfast. It was apt to be a silent, hurried meal, for one was to hasten to an office, another to a school, and as Hugh was drawing on

his overcoat in the hall, Mrs. Terry went out to him and slipped a latch-key in his hand.

"There," she said jocosely, "mind, you must always be able to find the keyhole."

He opened his hand, looked at the key and then at his landlady, and a bright smile flashed into his face.

"Thank you," he said.

Mrs. Terry gave him a playful push.

"You need n't be so thankful for a little piece of brass like that."

"Ah, but the little piece of brass means so much," he said. "It means that a poor fellow is going to have what he thought he never should find in this big city — a pleasant home" — he hesitated — "and kind friends."

"You 've kissed the blarney stone," cried Mrs. Terry, but she went back to the dining-room and declared that she felt like a mother towards that boy. She had no children, no kinsfolk, and it was not strange that she lived not only by, but for her boarders; and although genteel widows often say that they take boarders for company, it was true to a certain degree of Mrs. Terry. Her interest in them was not, however, merely sentimental. She asked as high a price as she dared, and exacted weekly payments from Mr. Kane and Monsieur Valrey as if they were strangers who might decamp, leaving only a battered trunk full of paving-stones. Ill bred as she was herself, she recognized gentle breeding, even beneath a shabby coat;

the duplicate of Mrs. Terry she would have found vulgar and common. She gloried in the decorum of the Kanes; she exulted in Monsieur Valrey's aristocratic bearing; and Pauline she considered everything that a lady should be in looks and manner. It thrilled the coarse-grained, loud-talking woman with tender pride to have Pauline taken for her daughter, although she once said that if Pauline were her daughter, she would not let her teach a parcel of saucy girls. Mrs. Terry would have made an over-fond mother. She would have worked her fingers to the bone, so that her pampered darling should grow into a tawdry imitation of a fine, idle lady; and had there been a Miss Terry, a cheap piano would have been among the adornments of the hideous parlor, and a damsel with her hair in curl papers would have thrummed on the keys, while the landlady contentedly slaved over the kitchen stove. When Pauline had first come to the house, a pinched, big-eyed girl, budding into womanhood, Mrs. Terry's horror was great to learn that she had not been inside a church for several years. Monsieur Valrey was cursed with the passive unbelief of the age; his young wife had not had the sort of piety that braves a free seat and listens to sermons in a shabby gown. She had been Protestant, however, and Pauline could remember seeing her read a Bible on Sunday evenings, but church going was out of the child's experience. Mrs. Terry, who was a Presbyterian, carried her off

every Sunday morning, and Monsieur Valrey was willing that his daughter should be as religious as she pleased. To Pauline the sermons and prayers were rather dull, and only the music and the sight of the well-dressed people drew her to church, after the first novelty had worn away. Still, she grew into the habit of accompanying Mrs. Terry regularly, and sometimes Monsieur went with them, for he had no fierce antagonism to priest or parson, and he could listen to the service as he could listen to a woman's talk, with calm patience. The poetry of religion appealed somewhat to Pauline; the sublime mystery of it awed her, but she never found the consolation in a church that women often do, even while the peacefulness of the sanctuary had for her a certain comfort. She believed all that was agreeable; she did not vex herself about questions of heaven or hell; knotty theological problems never troubled her, and she had a vague notion that after death peace would follow for all those whom she loved. It did not disturb her a whit that her father cared so little for religion. The minister could say what he liked, she knew her father was good, and that no eternal torment was in store for him. Hers was a comfortable and very feminine doctrine. It slipped about the rocks and snags and flowed in a way of pleasantness. She picked out by unerring instinct the sweetest parts of the Bible to read, skipping over the threats and dwelling on the promises. It was characteristic of her. She did

not like disagreeable things; she drew her skirts about her closer and avoided them.

Having adopted Hugh as a member of her family, the landlady straightway began to be proud of him, and when she came across a hackneyed Latin phrase in the paper, she would turn to him and say, "Come, now, Mr. Langmuir, you have been to college, what does this mean?"

And not only she, but Pauline, too, respected him the more because of the wonderful ease with which he translated such difficult bits of a dead language as "*Deus ex machina*," or "*Facile princeps*," or when some reporter rose to a loftier height, "*Palmam qui meruit ferat.*" And his half-scornful, half-foolish smile, and his assertion that all this was known to every school-boy, only deepened their awe of his erudition.

He distinguished himself, too, by the skill with which he doctored an hysterical window-shade or a limping chair, and when Monsieur Valrey met him one Sunday morning coming upstairs with a hammer in his hand, he begged him to drive a nail or two in his studio. This was a small room at the back of the third floor, and the window gave a sweeping view of a great expanse of wizened, high-fenced yards, where lean cats stepped about gingerly, and nondescript garments were always fluttering in the wind.

Hugh hardly glanced at the pictures on the walls. Some were framed, others were squares of canvas held in place by brass tacks, but they were

all small, and each was finished with such exquisite delicacy that it was strange they were not more admired by a people who pay vast sums for a bit of Meissonier's work. Here was a page who had fallen asleep while waiting outside a door. The woodwork of the anteroom in which he sat was painted as Gerard Dow is said to have painted a broom handle, with a care that was almost painful. The page, a tall, fair-haired boy in blue velvet, held his plumed hat between his relaxed fingers, and his tired head lay against the high-backed, carved chair. In another picture, a beggar girl, a mere child with a sweet, serious face, stood under a street lamp, counting some pennies that lay in her palm. The yellow glare of the lamp brought out every patch and hole in her tattered dress. There was a little pucker of anxiety about her baby mouth, and she fingered the pennies with suggestive eagerness. There was no affectation of pathos in any of Valrey's pictures; they were simple and unpretending, yet there was an atmosphere of sadness in each, something of fatigue, even in his earlier work, as though he had known in joyous youth how disappointing life was to be to him. In the last picture he had painted, a plain, hard-featured man stood leaning against a post on an old wharf, looking down at the black, sluggish water. The sun shone bright on the rotten timbers, and in the deep shade of a heap of crumbling bricks was a gray rat, nibbling at a bone in a way which told how long the man had stood there si-

lent and motionless. On the man's face was a hopeless smile that betokened deeper despair than any frowning brow could. In this picture, pathos had grown into tragedy.

It pleased Monsieur Valrey that Hugh did not seem to see the pictures; he drove the nails in place, and, smiling in response to Monsieur's thanks, withdrew to his own room opposite. Hugh had something of a woman's tact and delicacy, and he felt that a painter who had failed could hardly care to have his despised work admired by an ignorant. He came back to the studio in a minute, and finding the door ajar, said as he stood without: —

"Monsieur Valrey?"

This pleased the old man, too; he disliked to be dubbed professor; every dancing-master was a professor; and he said cheerfully, "Come in, come in, my friend."

He sometimes translated his French thought literally, but there is more in the English "my friend" than in the French "*mon ami*," and the words fell gratefully on Hugh's ear, sensitive as the ear of youth is to the lightest note of sympathy or affection.

"I want to show you this miniature of my mother," he said. "It looks like her yet, though it was painted twenty-five years ago by a countryman of yours, who wandered way up to Maine where my mother lived before her marriage."

Monsieur Valrey put on his spectacles deliber-

ately to look at the little oval portrait encased in a rim of gilt and faded purple plush.

"An exquisite piece of work," he said; "ah, exquisite. Do you know the painter's name?"

"Yes, Philippe Mertens. He"—

"Philippe Mertens!" cried Monsieur Valrey. "Not possible! but we studied together. I remember he did come to this country."

Hugh laughed softly. "He was in love with my mother, so I have heard, and it was while he was in love with her that he painted the miniature. He made a name for himself up there in Portland, and he died not many years ago, leaving his family a little fortune — for, though his first love affair was disastrous, he married afterward, of course."

Monsieur Valrey looked French and jaunty for a second.

"Of course," he echoed, with a twitch of his shoulders and eyebrows. Then he studied the miniature earnestly before he gave it back to Hugh, saying: —

"A lovely face — the face of a good, amiable lady."

Hugh raised the portrait to his lips impulsively, ashamed of himself the next minute, but to Valrey the action was only natural and pleasing, and it drew him nearer yet to Hugh. He had known many American young men, but never one who appeared to him as this one did, and the conduct of his pupils to their parents had struck him as so

lacking in respect and affection that he was beginning to think that no American youth would be likely to cherish a mother's portrait, much less kiss it fondly.

It only happened that he saw Hugh in a good light, for Hugh was just learning to appreciate his mother, and it was the sudden remembrance of his hasty words and her patience, his willfulness and her forbearance, that, welling up in his heart, had filled it with remorseful tenderness, as he gazed on her pictured face. Against her wishes he had left college; against her wishes he had quitted the country and come to the town, yet when she had found that pleading and argument were in vain, she had packed his trunk for him and bidden him God speed. His feverish desire to gain wealth seemed like a disease to her, but there was no sting of reproach in her farewell words.

"Come back to us when you are tired of it," she had said.

Yes, he would go back, he thought, when he could build a fine house for her, and prove that he had done well to seek his fortune in New York. It was with such aspirations that John Kane had shaken the country dust off his feet, and that Paul Valrey had crossed the sea, but although they two had failed and become resigned to failure, they both believed that Hugh would succeed. They never said so to him or to each other; they never discouraged the boy, for boy he seemed to them,

by the story of their own fruitless efforts to achieve fame or fortune. They only watched him, and in their regard was a yearning sympathy that was almost pitiful.

III.

CHRISTMAS dawned, a clear, keen, glistening day, a light fall of snow hiding the grime of the town. Hugh went out early, but some happy boys in Harloe Row were abroad already, and scampered up and down the street, snow-balling each other and filling the air with joyous shouts. He responded to their holiday greetings gayly; he had made the acquaintance of one bright-eyed lad, and he seized the rope of his new sled and bidding its chubby owner be seated, he gave the urchin a flying ride as far as the corner. He had to walk across to Third Avenue before he found the florist's shop he sought, and he bought some flowers which he carried home done up in a multitude of soft papers. A few he sent to Mrs. Kane, a few more he put in a glass at Mrs. Terry's place on the breakfast table, but a little bunch of roses he kept until Pauline came down.

"Merry Christmas," she said.

"And a merry Christmas to you," he returned, holding out the roses to her.

"For me?" And when he nodded and smiled, she took them and fastened them in her dress. "Ah, how sweet they are!" she added, "and how kind of you to get them. Roses in midwinter!"

"You ought to have them always," he said. It seemed as though she had a right to all the roses of the world. He could not see a fat old woman lolling back in a carriage without a fierce impulse rising up in his heart to pull her off those satin cushions and put Pauline in her place. He hardly knew that he loved her, yet she had taken root in his dreams; he pictured her the mistress of a beautiful home, sitting at the head of a table, a liveried servant behind her chair; he saw her dispensing gracious hospitality, driving out in her carriage, walking about a conservatory, wearing fine laces and rare jewels. If he could give her all this! The thought intoxicated him, and as he watched her fasten the roses on her breast, he nearly spoke his thought aloud.

"Do you ever wish you were rich?" he asked.

She reflected for a minute before she answered, slowly, in a way that showed how little she had thought of the infinite possibilities of the future:

"I don't know. Being rich seems like being somebody else. I can't imagine it. Sometimes I wish I had money enough to buy long gloves. It annoys me to shop about, trying to find cheap things."

"Oh, I mean more than that," he exclaimed. "I mean going shopping in a carriage and buying whatever strikes your fancy."

She laughed. "Yes, that would be pleasant; but a school-teacher does not go shopping in a carriage, and buy whatever strikes her fancy."

"You may not be a school-teacher all your life; indeed, I am sure you will not."

"Sure?" she repeated, looking him full in the eyes, the faint color flickering in her cheeks.

"Sure," he said.

"Oh no, we can't be sure. Who knows what is in store for us both? You have your duties every day and I have mine, and I think if we do our work well, and have faith that everything will come right in the end, we shall find happiness without great wealth. Why do you put such ideas into my head?" she cried, impetuously, "ideas of idleness and luxury. We have no right to think of them."

"No right to think of them," he echoed; "would you have me be contented to plod along in a dull rut all my life?"

Her bright smile lit up her face then. "I would have you contented; I would have you find pleasure in what you call a dull rut. There are no dull ruts for a man who has faith in God, and does with his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do."

She spoke warmly, but her words fell on barren ground. He only thought how lovely she was when her eyes grew big and bright, and that tinge of color, so slight that it was hardly a blush, ebbed and flowed in her pale face. He could not speak. What could he say indeed, except that she must not measure men by her own standard; she could not understand their passions or ambi-

tions. It would be profane to breathe worldly wisdom into her mind. He would not change her, he only hoped that he might keep the dross of life from touching the hem of her garment; and her words, instead of checking his ambition, fired it, for what could be too good for her? Pearls were not pure enough, gold was not bright enough to adorn her fair brow. At that minute, there was not in all New York a dwelling fit for Pauline Valrey, and Hugh was building a castle for her as he ate his breakfast off Mrs. Terry's heavy stone-ware.

He and Monsieur Valrey went to church with her that morning, and Hugh listened to prayers and hymns and sermons in a dream. When they came out again to the crisp air, the world was so unreal to him that he forgot he was poor Hugh Langmuir, the clerk, not prosperous Hugh Langmuir, the banker, and he walked towards one of the fine carriages drawn up at the curb as though it were his, as though he and the Valreys were to be driven off to a stately mansion. The tall footman who stood guard at the door stared at Hugh's shabby overcoat with a supercilious smile that brought the imaginary banker down to the real clerk, yet the flunkey's hand went up to his hat when Pauline approached.

"That is not our carriage," she said, laughing a little, but looking at Hugh in pity.

The "our" made his blood tingle.

"I know it," he returned, "but we shall have one some day."

To her, however, a carriage was as far off and unattainable as a ducal coronet. She had not been brought up in the American notion that even a ducal coronet can be won by shrewdness; looking back to her childhood, she could remember poverty which made life in Mrs. Terry's comfortable boarding-house and a position in Madam Kenyon's school seem too good to be regarded lightly, much less scornfully. She had never lacked bread, but she had seen so thin a slice cut that a loaf in the cupboard was a sign of prosperity.

"Ah, you are ungrateful," she said to Hugh as they joined Papa Valrey.

"Indeed I am not," he said, looking in her upturned face.

While they had been in church the sun had thawed the light snow, and the ugliness beneath was revealed. The walks were wet, and they picked their way cautiously across a street, where a nauseous compound of mud and melting snow made stones slimy and treacherous. A carriage bore down on them, the very carriage Hugh had fancied was his, and the rosy-cheeked English coachman did not try to turn his horses aside; it was for people on foot to get out of his way. Hugh stopped short and raised his walking stick, and the horses, heavy, well-meaning brutes, pulled up of their own accord. In half a minute, Pauline and her father were out of danger of being splashed by the wheels, and Hugh followed them, deaf to the coachman's insolent words.

"That was a very foolish performance," said Papa Valrey, but Pauline thought it a fine one, and there was admiration in her eyes.

"Oh, I knew those lazy horses would not run me down," said Hugh lightly, "and I don't choose to be covered with mud from rich folks' carriages."

He glanced at Pauline's neat winter dress, and she knew that he had thought of her, not himself. He saw that she understood and her smile not only repaid him, but made him long to rescue her from a burning house or do some heroic deed that should prove his chivalric devotion.

Meanwhile he could only help her into a prosaic, bad-smelling street-car that jogged along the edge of the Park, where the trees, still laden with snow, made a pretty picture in the sunlight.

"It was hardly two months ago that I first saw you," he said. "You and your father stood there on the corner waiting for the car, and I wondered where you could be going over to the East side. I was horribly embarrassed when I had to follow you up to Harloe Row, and on Mrs. Terry's doorstep I came near sinking through the stones in shame."

"Were papa and I so terrible?"

"Oh no, but I thought you must put me down as an impertinent fellow, who was bent on finding out where you lived and who you were."

"You know where we live and all about us now."

"Yes, and you know all about me."

"Do we? All about you?"

"Certainly. I have no mysterious past, no dark secrets. I never so much as sanded the sugar when I was in Cousin Thomas's store."

"Why did n't you stay there?" she asked.

"Because there was no chance. I could have grown into a country store-keeper, perhaps been so lucky as to be sent to the legislature for a term. I have always the store to fall back on, though, but I would not go home a failure."

"The saddest failure is not the failure to get money," she said, thinking of her father and the shipwreck of his hope and ambition.

"But money stands for shrewdness, sagacity; it means power," he returned, and he thought of such potentates as the Rothschilds.

The car stopped to admit two young men, types of the worst class a great city produces. They were clean, decently dressed enough, but their brutal faces showed that such intelligence as they possessed was turned to only the basest uses. Vice had blotted out humanity. They were not mere animals, for most animals are susceptible to kindness, but these creatures could be controlled only through their cowardice. A policeman's club they understood and feared. They stared at Pauline in a way that made Hugh writhe, and he glanced at her to see how she bore the weight of those men's blasphemous gaze. She was unconscious of it. There was some dark fur about her

neck and her delicate face rose up out of it like a flower. He thought of that satin-lined carriage. It was against such crimson cushions that she should rest her soft cheek; she ought not to be in this reeking car, exposed to the admiring stare of coarse men. Hugh watched the pair opposite, half fearing, half hoping that they would say or do something which would make him spring upon them and hurl them out into the mud where they belonged, but they only stared in silence. Other people entered the car, and Pauline was again pressed close to Hugh's side. He rose, muttering something about a crowd, and stood before her, holding fast to a strap and looking down at her until he caught Monsieur Valrey's eye. The old man smiled a little, the young man blushed, and Pauline, who saw both smile and blush, studied her gloves carefully.

At the dinner table that day she returned Hugh's eager glances so shyly, that Mrs. Terry and Mr. Kane exchanged a meaning look, and the red-faced servant went about with a mysterious, yet pleased expression. Monsieur Valrey, who pretended to see nothing, had known that Hugh was in love with Pauline before Hugh quite knew it himself, and Pauline, who had rather puzzled her father so far, puzzled him no longer. And Monsieur Valrey was not sorry to see love springing up in his daughter's heart; he rejoiced. The thought that he must leave her alone to battle with the world had haunted him, for she had been

guarded tenderly all her life, and many a night did the old man lie down, wondering whether the next morning would find his daughter without a protector. It seemed to him that he could die in peace if he saw her folded in the arm of a good man, who would give her a home, however modest, where she would be happy. He trusted Hugh; he had watched his daughter anxiously, fearing that she might be blind to her lover's amiable traits and fine qualities, and when he saw that she was not blind he drew a great breath of relief. He believed that she was safe. Her secret he read in a hundred signs. Nothing escaped him, not even the little quiver about her lips when Hugh's footstep sounded along the hall; and when he entered the parlor and Pauline looked up with a quick, questioning smile, her father's heart gave a throb of thanksgiving. He grew gentler towards her; he felt that he could not do enough for her.

"Pauline," he said one day as they were leaving the school, "your dress is getting shabby. Do you think I am so old that I can't see? Let us go shopping."

She reproved him gently for his extravagance, but he led her to a great shop forthwith, and bought her a soft, wine-colored silk. She was horrified, and she said, —

"I have no need of that. When am I to wear it?"

"Every night until it is in tatters. I like to

see you in pretty clothes. Will you do nothing to please me?"

She slipped her hand through his arm.

"Whom else should I please?"

He looked in her face with a droll smile and she turned her head.

When the dress was made she donned it one evening, and her appearance in the dining-room was hailed by Mrs. Terry with delight.

"There, now, that is something like. Turn around. It fits like a glove, don't it, Mr. Kane?"

"Indeed it does. You must go and show yourself to my wife, Miss Pauline. She does n't have much chance to see the fashions." He was in the dry goods line and he felt of the silk critically. "It will wear well," he added.

Hugh stood in the doorway and said not a word. This outcry over a new dress seemed pitiful to him. To think that she had so few new pretty dresses that this was an occasion for great rejoicing!

"Don't you like it?" she asked, turning towards him.

He smiled a little. "Oh yes," he answered, and his tone and his glance made Mrs. Terry wink at Mr. Kane, who assumed a preternaturally grave expression, as though to rebuke the levity that prompted the wink.

"I wear it to-night," said Pauline, "to celebrate a great event. I have my first private pupil.

One of the young ladies who is leaving the school wants me to read and speak French with her an hour three times a week. She lives in Madison Avenue, and now I shall see how those big houses look inside."

Hugh frowned heavily. In the parlor, after dinner, he said abruptly, —

"I hate to think of your teaching a lot of stupid girls."

"Ah, but they are not all stupid."

"Don't you hate it?" he asked.

"Hate teaching? I never thought of hating it or enjoying it particularly. It is my *métier* — my trade. I suppose I shall always teach.

"You shall not," said Hugh, fiercely.

They were alone for those few minutes, and the gas had been turned low. Pauline reached her hand up to the burner, but Hugh caught her by the wrist.

"Pauline," he said, and his voice trembled a little.

"Hush, Hugh," she whispered softly. Then he kissed her hand.

Monsieur Valrey came in with his spectacles and newspaper.

"It is very dark here," he said. He turned on the gas, and when the light flooded the room, he did not seem to notice the two flushed, excited faces that it revealed, but seated himself deliberately by the table and unfolded his paper.

Hugh's breath came quick and hard. His eyes

sought Pauline's, and she lifted hers with a smile that answered him. Love needs no words; love can beg and yield in silence.

The next day was Sunday, and after Pauline had gone to church, Hugh followed Monsieur Valrey to the studio.

"Monsieur," he said bravely, "I want to speak to you" — he closed the door — "about your daughter."

"Be seated," said Monsieur Valrey, but Hugh only backed up against the door, and stood there for a long minute in silence, cudgeling his brains. Monsieur spoke not a word. He crossed his legs, and rubbed his knee gently with his thin, sinewy fingers until his sympathy got the better of his dignity.

"My boy," he said, "I think I know what you have to say." He held out his hand, and Hugh grasped it with grateful fervor. "But let me be quite frank," Monsieur continued. "You are poor."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I am poor now, but I don't mean to be poor always."

A satirical smile played about the old Frenchman's mouth for an instant. Did ever a young fellow of two or three and twenty mean to be poor always, obscure always, always to wear rusty coats and board with some widow Terry, east of some First Avenue? Oh no.

"What I meant," he said, "was that you should say nothing to my daughter just now. You had

better wait. Let her remain in ignorance of your love."

"She knows it," said Hugh, guiltily.

"What!" cried Monsieur.

"I did not tell her, — I was sure you would not like that — I speak to you first — but she knows it."

"And perhaps you know also her sentiments, Mr. Langmuir."

Monsieur Valrey's tone had grown chilly, but Hugh looked at him squarely and said, —

"Yes, I believe I do."

This won the day for him. Monsieur threw up his hands in despair.

"Love and smoke cannot be hid. Oh, well, my boy, I saw it coming, and I could have prevented it, had I wished. A word from me and our landlady would have told you to look up another boarding place. You are a good fellow, as the phrase goes here. You have permission to marry my daughter — if you can win her — that is, if you have not won her already."

The two gentlemen shook hands again, and Hugh drew up a chair close to Monsieur Valrey, saying,

"I have not spoken to her yet. I know a little about French customs."

"Precious little," said Monsieur, gravely making use of one of Mrs. Terry's phrases, which sounded droll enough from his lips. He caught up street slang and an occasional school-girl idiom,

and repeated them, all unconscious of the incongruity.

"Yes," said Hugh, "but over here, we speak to — to — *her* first, and her father afterward."

"Humph; here the father takes it as a compliment to be considered at all. I shall not allow an American engagement, Monsieur Hugh, no long walks, no *tête-à-têtes* in a shut-up room. You must yield somewhat to my French ideas, though it is impossible to carry them completely out in this country. I never was alone with my wife until we were married — that is — except once or twice for a few minutes."

Hugh smoothed his lips to hide a smile. "I will yield anything to you, Monsieur."

"Ta-ta, not the first place in Pauline's heart, eh?"

The playful banter of a stern, unsmiling elderly gentleman is apt to be embarrassing, and Hugh was miserable until the jocose mood left Monsieur.

"Hugh," he said, "if you succeed in this world, it will be because you are wise enough to tell Pauline everything, consult her, let her rule you a little. A woman at home thinks as she goes about her work, and if she is at all a clever woman, her husband will learn to rely on her judgment. Have your wife for your best friend, your confidant, not one to sew and cook for you."

He frowned impatiently and brushed back his bristling hair.

"I can't say what I wish in English. Pauline is sagacious, Hugh. She has had no chance yet, but she is like her mother, and if I had followed my wife's advice, I should not be a failure and poor. You do what Pauline thinks best and you will not fail. Tell me now what money you have, what your prospects are. I must know all."

And Hugh told him, exaggerating nothing, withholding nothing. His salary had been raised; he was getting nearly eight hundred dollars a year. When the head book-keeper, a man past fifty, stepped aside, Hugh hoped to take his place, and then he would receive twelve or fifteen hundred.

"And Mr. Hilyer, — that 's the book-keeper," he said, "talks of going west, to Terre Haute, to join his son-in-law, who has a small manufacturing concern there. He wants a higher salary, and the company won't give it, so I should n't be surprised any day to hear that he was to leave. I am almost sure I would get his position; indeed Mr. Prosper as much as told me so."

"Who is Mr. Prosper," Monsieur asked.

"He is president of the company. There are three, the president, secretary, and treasurer; but the treasurer is generally at the works over in New Jersey, and the secretary travels all the time, so Mr. Prosper runs things pretty nearly as he likes. He is a millionaire, and he works as hard as I do. He is n't the man to give hasty promises, but he said one day that he hoped I would stand by him if Mr. Hilyer left, and that meant a good deal, coming from him."

"Yes," said Monsieur. "I suppose your father is not able to help you?"

"He has only his salary as a minister. My mother has a little money, and she needs every penny of it. Oh, I don't want any help from home; I can make my own way. Mr. Prosper was as poor as I once, and now he is very rich, and he is only forty. I don't want to be like him, though. He takes no pleasure in life. He is a bachelor; he lives in a hotel; he cares nothing for horses, or pictures, or society, or anything, except the Essex Manufacturing Company."

"A type," said Monsieur. "Well, Hugh, when you are getting a little more salary, you and Pauline can begin to think of marrying. She has been brought up economically, and if she had a few pupils"—

"Oh no," cried Hugh, "I would not let her teach. I can take care of her. We must wait a year or two, that is all."

While he talked, he listened for Pauline's step on the stairs, and when he heard it, he sprang up impulsively. Monsieur Valrey rose, too, and going out to the dark little hall, met his daughter. He put his arm about her, and kissed her; then said: —

"Hugh is in the studio, waiting for you."

He led her into the room, and went out, closing the door softly, and he stood listening for what seemed to him a long time; but when the low murmur of voices smote on his expectant ear, he walked away.

Dinner was served at one o'clock on Sundays, and the bell had jingled twice before Monsieur tapped on the studio door.

"Come, *mes enfants*, dinner is waiting. Come."

He let them follow him, and when they entered the dining-room, their faces were so tell-tale that Mrs. Terry and Mr. Kane knew at once what had happened. Mrs. Terry kissed Pauline, and Hugh was shaken hands with and congratulated, and Mr. Kane ran down to the liquor store on the corner and came back bringing a bottle of wine. Everybody drank everybody's health, and Pauline sat by smiling a little, rather confused by this commotion, while Hugh looked like a man who had conquered a kingdom, but old Paul Valrey was perhaps the happiest of them all. Yet a new longing stirred within him. He had thought that he would be willing to die if once his daughter's future was assured; now he began to hope that he might live to be happy in her happiness.

IV.

If Mrs. Terry could have had her way, the lovers would have been left alone in the parlor every evening.

"Now, M'seer," she said to the stern father, who was determined to be faithful to the customs of his native land, "they want to be by themselves; they don't want you and me around. We can sit in the dining-room, and I have got a lamp that is first-rate to read by, and I guess if we took the drop-light away from 'em, they would n't much mind."

"No, Mrs. Terry," said Monsieur Valrey, "I cannot consent to such a plan."

He seated himself every evening in the parlor as usual, and the landlady was forced to follow his example. But she did what she could, however; she resolutely turned her back to the little sofa in the corner where Hugh and Pauline sat, and when their voices grew soft and low, she nearly drove Monsieur Valrey distracted by talking at the top of her lungs.

"Pauline," he said one evening, "you had better begin to teach Hugh French. It might be of use to him in his business. There are plenty of grammars up in my room."

Mrs. Terry sniffed, but Hugh was charmed with

the plan and the lessons began at once. Pauline's method with her pupil was what is called the natural one. She had a book, indeed, and Hugh's head was close to hers, bending over the page, his hand clasping hers under the prosaic cover of the grammar; and even Papa Valrey smiled when he heard the verb *aimer* conjugated in all its moods and tenses. Then came the exercises in French.

"'Have you a beautiful garden?'" Pauline asked.

"No," Hugh answered in English, "but I mean to have it."

"Oh, that is n't in the book."

"No matter; what comes next?"

"'Have you seen the son of the gardener?'"

"'No, I have not seen the son of the gardener,'" was Hugh's reply in French; then in English, softly, "but I have seen the lovely daughter of the painter."

In spite of these asides the lessons went on bravely all that winter, and Hugh made astonishing progress, so that before spring came, he could read a little French aloud to her, she correcting his accent while she sewed. Mrs. Terry had given them a lamp to themselves in their own corner, and the readings went on in this fashion: —

"*J'ai connoo un homme*" —

"Not '*connoo*,'" Pauline mimicked him sweetly, "*connu*."

"*J'ai connyou un homme*" —

"*U, u;* don't you hear the difference?"

"To be sure, but I can't say that, dear; my mouth is n't right, and my mustache is in the way."

"Oh, nonsense! now look at me, Hugh," and he looked at her with an adoring smile. "You must purse up your lips, so, '*J'ai connu.*' See?"

He took her face between his hands and kissed the pursed up lips softly, very sure that neither Mrs. Terry nor Papa Valrey would glance that way.

"You will never learn, Hugh," she said, in gentle despair; but he did learn, although he could not remember that he must not *tutoyer* the whole world, and perhaps his vocabulary would not have helped him greatly in a counting-room.

He brought Pauline a few flowers every Saturday night, but he wore shabbier coats than ever, for he was saving his money, and the weekly outlay for a rose or two, or a tiny bunch of violets seemed a mad extravagance. His burning energy made the dull round of his daily duties a terrible, grinding drudgery; he longed to dash out, to see some goal that by push and work he might attain. Once he ventured to ask his employer for a higher salary, and he met with a cold response, to the effect that if he was not satisfied with his position he was at liberty to look up another. Hugh dared not quit his place for an uncertainty; trade was dull; the newspapers were full of talk about the depression in business, and more than one old firm collapsed and sank out of sight. There were hundreds of young men in New York

who were ready to step into Hugh's shoes, and he knew it. He ought to be satisfied; he was doing very well, and if he were only patient — but was there ever a patient lover?

The long winter blew itself away at last in the March winds, and spring stole on the town, making the squares green once more. On pleasant Sunday afternoons Pauline and her father and Hugh went up to the Park, deserted on that day by the fashionable world, but crowded with the unfashionable. Papa Valrey found a bench under the trees, and there he would sit, with his hands on his walking-stick, absently watching the nurses and children, while Hugh and Pauline wandered off where they would. The old Frenchman had absorbed more American ideas than he suspected, and he could not bear to be always dogging the lovers' footsteps. He wanted them to enjoy their youth; he remembered what they might do with a little money in his own dear France, and he sighed. Amusements there are in plenty in New York for the very rich and for the ignorant poor, there are none for the Valreys and Langmuirs. His mind wandered back to his joyous young days, to the little excursions, to the inexpensive, but not coarse pleasures, and while he dwelt on these memories, a vague smile played about his mouth. The smile went out slowly as his thoughts drew nearer and nearer the present, for they were saddened by the sense of his failure to achieve a jot of all that he had hoped. Life had been hard on

him; he could not believe it would be so hard on his daughter. When she came towards him, he would look at her wistfully, then at Hugh.

"Time we went home, papa."

"Is it? Yes, I suppose so;" and then he would rise and walk at her side in silence. He ought to be able to help these two, was his bitter reflection; he ought to see them in their own home before he died.

Once, as they three were walking from the Park, they met a gentleman who raised his hat in return to Hugh's salutation, and gave a quick glance at Pauline, but she did not look towards him.

"That was Mr. Prosper," said Hugh.

"Oh, why did n't you tell me before," she exclaimed. "I wanted so to see him."

"He is not much to look at; he has a face like a piece of stone. I suppose he is going to see his sister — or rather his half-sister, Miss Berryan. She is very rich, and she lives in Fifth Avenue all by herself — a cross, crabbed spinster, likely. Her father never helped Mr. Prosper at all, though he had lots of money, and it all went to this Berryan dame, but Mr. Prosper takes care of her fortune."

"You clerks gossip a little, I suspect," said Pauline, slyly.

"Oh, Jim Whyte tells me all this. He used to be in our office, but he is with a firm of brokers now. We come up town together generally, and sometimes I lunch with him. Not often, though. He is making money and he is n't content with a

sandwich and a glass of milk at noon any longer. I wish I could get with a firm of brokers."

"Better stay where you are," said Papa Valrey, in his deepest voice. To him, Wall Street was a great pitfall for the feet of the unwary, and the brokers that there do mostly congregate were vampires who battened on human flesh. He was as worldly wise as Pauline, and his notions of business were so misty and extraordinary that Hugh laughed in his sleeve sometimes when a financial question was under discussion. In talking to the old Frenchman, Hugh swelled a little with a sense of his superior knowledge of men and affairs, and unconsciously he spoke in such an all-knowing way that Monsieur Valrey considered his future son-in-law quite a marvel of shrewdness and sagacity. The boy would succeed in life he was sure. His aspirations were not those of an artist who hungers more for recognition than money, and in New York, Monsieur thought, mere money getting was not so difficult.

V.

THE school term was over, and the long summer vacation begun by the second week in June. As the days slipped by, the weather grew stifling, and in Harloe Row the hot breeze swept into opened windows, bringing fetid smells from factories and refineries. Pauline, freed from school duties, busied herself with Mrs. Terry's sewing-machine, and replenished her modest wardrobe; her father had naught to do, for his private pupils had shaken the dust of the town off their feet soon after the four-in-hand parade. In First Avenue, the rowdies were quarrelsome, and shrieks of drunken men and women often rang out in the night. There was always a street band playing on the corner, the braying, brassy sound of a cornet mingling with the whining strains of a hand-organ, while above all rose the hoarse shouts of men peddling fruit. The pitiful cry of little children broke the silence of early morning; canary birds in cages, hung outside of windows, added their shrill mite to the never ending noise, and horses dragged rattling carts over the pavements, until they fell dead in the harness.

Monsieur Valrey drooped beneath the blazing July sun, Mrs. Terry perspired and scolded, Paul-

ine's cheek grew paler and paler, and Hugh came home at night half exhausted, longing as only a country-bred man can long for fields and woods. In August, he would have a ten days' vacation, and his mother urged him to come home and bring Pauline, but the long railway journey to the village and back cost a sum that was appalling. Yet Hugh was determined to get out of the town for a little while; and when he saw Pauline's pale face, and noted her listless manner, he became reckless and desperate. Through one of his fellow clerks he heard of a boarding-house in the Catskills where board was cheap, and he laid the plan of going thither before Monsieur Valrey and Pauline.

"The board is only six dollars a week," said Hugh, "and an excursion ticket to Killowville and back will not cost much, for we can go by one of the Hudson River boats. I have the farmer's address. Suppose I write and find out if he can accommodate us?"

He looked eagerly at Monsieur, wistfully at Pauline.

"We all need a change," he added, "and, Monsieur, you can afford it better than I."

"A man of my age cannot act hastily," said Monsieur, as though a journey to the heart of Africa had been proposed. "I must reflect. Oh no," he cried, "to the deuce with reflections! We will go. We have but one life to live. Let us enjoy ourselves. Write to the man, Hugh. We will go, — we will start to-morrow. *Allons!*"

He strode up and down the little parlor, shaking his head and muttering to himself.

"We can't start to-morrow," said Hugh.

"And, pray, why not?" Monsieur demanded, turning on him fiercely.

"Because my vacation does not begin yet for a week," was the answer.

"Ah, but we need a week to make preparation," said Monsieur.

"I wonder where the key of my trunk is?" murmured Pauline, pensively.

And so it was decided that they should go. Hugh wrote to the farmer, who sent a reply at once, offering to take the party on terms that made it possible for Hugh and the Valreys to spend ten days in the mountains.

"I don't believe we shall get much to eat," Hugh said to Pauline.

"Oh, there will be berries and nuts," she returned, gayly; "and you can shoot birds, and I will cook them on a little fire in the woods."

"I wish I had a gun," said Hugh. "I am not a bad shot."

"You can cut a bow and make arrows and kill birds without a gun," cried Pauline, "and a gun is such a terrible thing. Oh, Hugh!" and she gave an ecstatic skip, "I feel as though I could fly to the mountains!"

Mrs. Terry frowned on the scheme; she said they might as well stay at home and make excursions to Coney Island and other popular resorts

near New York. As for Mr. Kane, he showed plainly enough that he thought the plan a foolish piece of extravagance, and the mild opposition made Monsieur Valrey eager to start for parts unknown by the first train. The old gentleman was as excited as a child, and before he left Harloe Row, he put such worldly goods as he possessed in perfect order, and told the landlady that his will was in the left hand drawer of the table in his studio.

"I may never return, Mrs. Terry," he said, "and I will say now, that I am deeply sensible of the kindness you have showed me and my daughter since we came to live with you. I know that I have a friend in you, and I trust that after I am gone you will make my daughter feel that under your roof she may always find a home."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mrs. Terry, "you 're good for twenty years yet."

It was a noisome, sultry day that saw the adventurous trio from Harloe Row seated on the deck of a Hudson River steamer, waiting impatiently for the last passenger to step aboard and the gang plank be pulled in. At last there was the twang of a gong, — a casting off of hawsers, a cool swish of paddle-wheels, and the great boat swept away from the panting town. The breeze blew against Pauline's face, and brought a tinge of color to her cheeks and lips. It was not long before Hugh, who had been sad and silent for weeks, began to talk with his old exuberance.

"See, Pauline," he said, pointing to a large stone house on the left bank of the river. It was set in a velvet lawn, and shaded by great trees. "That is the sort of place I mean to have some day. Look at the gardeners' cottages, and the big greenhouse and stables. Yes, that place would suit me."

"Could n't you be happy without so much grandeur, Hugh?"

"I could be happy anywhere with you, dear one," he answered.

They had found a secluded corner where they were out of sight and hearing, and Papa Valrey had as usual been kind enough to leave them, although it was with a rueful smile at his own foolish weakness. Pauline sat in a low chair, while Hugh lay stretched on the spotless deck at her feet. On they glided, every turn bringing a new picture, and their eyes, tired of brick and stone, rested gratefully on the green of grass and trees. From the lower deck came the music of violins and harps, the distance sweetening the tawdry strains of opera bouffe and minstrel melodies. Hugh was silent for a long time, but at last he said softly:—

"Pauline?"

"Yes, Hugh."

"Suppose I am always poor?"

She laid her cool fingers on his cheek, and he pressed his face against them as a loving dog presses his head against his master's hand.

It was late in the afternoon when they reached the village of Killowville. A line of farmers' wagons was drawn up near the pier, domineered over by a gaudy four-in-hand coach, which was in readiness to take guests to a monstrous hotel, perched far up on the mountain side. Hugh had some trouble to find his equipage, and it proved to be a high, two-seated wagon, drawn by a bony, sorrel mare. This modest turnout was one of the first to rattle away through the village, then up a steep, winding road, but the coach overtook it and passed it, a gentleman on the top raising his hat to Hugh.

"Mr. Prosper again," said Hugh.

"How can the office get on with both you and him away?" said Pauline, mischievously.

"I hope the mountain air makes him amiable," Hugh remarked. "He is savage in these days, — dyspepsia, I fancy."

The farmer who drove the sorrel mare smiled grimly.

"Lots o' dyspeptics go up to the Mountain House," he said, "and they eat trash and go 'way wuss than they come. Ef they had sense enough to live plain awhile, they would n't have so much to complain about."

The great hotel had hurt the small boarding-houses, and there was venom in this speech. The farmer jerked the reins and talked bitterly about the folly of city folks until his dwelling came in sight, a frame structure plumped down at the

roadside. It was painted a delicate shrimp-pink, with white trimmings, and it was hemmed in on all sides by trees.

"Here we be," he said, guiding the sorrel mare up to a stepping-stone.

Hugh drew a deep breath; he had not had a whiff of country air in so long that even the slight odor from the barn-yard was rather pleasing. He shook hands with the farmer's wife as though she were his dearest friend, and leaving Papa Valrey to the landlady's mercies, he and Pauline went off to make the acquaintance of some soft-eyed calves shut up in a pen. There were six or eight of them, and they were waiting for their evening meal, which the hired man presently brought. A weak little calf had a pan to himself, but the others pushed and nosed each other in their efforts to get their fill out of a long trough. A flock of young turkeys minced about the yard, piping plaintively; the gobbler swelled and strutted; ducks waddled to and fro, quacking complacently as though conscious of their superiority over chickens who never could swim; a cur dog, of mangy, but friendly aspect, lay on the kitchen steps, and wagged his tail whenever anybody looked his way; and through the opened stable door the mate to the sorrel mare could be seen, giving her left hind leg a rest. Against the glowing eastern sky, swallows dipped and soared, and in the west the level sun-rays beat against the trees and shot bright darts through every chink and crevice.

"When you git tired looking at the calves, you kin go up the hill over yender, and see the sun sat," said the farmer. "Folks say I 'd oughter sot the house up there on the hill; but I guess ef they wuz here along in January, they 'd as lief be in the lew of the hill as on top of it."

"Your boarders give you plenty of good advice, don't they?" said Hugh, with a twinkle in his eye that made the farmer's heart warm towards him.

"Lots," he answered, dryly. He was unharnessing the mare, and he chuckled to himself as he unbuckled the breeching straps. Hugh led him into telling tales about his over-wise boarders, and Pauline listened, and wondered why her sweetheart laughed, for the farmer's saturnine humor only mystified her. Her father, who had escaped from the landlady, joined the group, and smiled politely at the anecdotes, because he saw they were meant to be droll, but he understood them no better than Pauline did. The grim farmer's respect and admiration for Hugh were, however, very patent, and the French gentleman thought with a thrill of pride how gracefully his future son-in-law adapted himself to people and circumstances.

"Wanter to climb the hill and see the sun set?" the farmer said to him suddenly.

"I think that dinner is already prepared," Monsieur answered, graciously. "We may ascend the hill this evening. Come, Pauline."

And then the farmer grinned. "Gosh, the old gent talks like a book," he remarked privately to Hugh. "No kin to you, is he?"

Hugh explained briefly, and the farmer patted him on the back. "Goin' to marry that girl, are you? Most girls come to the mountains to look up a feller, but she 's come pervided."

Hugh laughed. He felt very much at home with the rustic boarding-house keeper, and never dreamed of taking offense at his blunt speeches. They went into the house together, and during the supper they two carried on most of the conversation. The landlady spoke up sharply when she saw Papa Valrey sawing hard at his piece of leathery beefsteak.

"We always brile our steaks," she said. "Some fry 'em, but we brile."

"Indeed, Madame?" quoth Monsieur, with an air of great interest, which evoked an astonished stare from her. Her husband knew that city people liked sunsets; she knew that city people swore by gridirons, and both sunsets and gridirons were part of the stock in trade.

"I s'pose you 'll be goin' trout fishin'," the landlady remarked to Hugh. She was a spare, sallow woman, who looked sickly, but who had what a horseman calls excellent "staying powers." She was the farmer's second wife, and was young enough to be the daughter of the gaunt, grizzled man whom she ruled with a firm hand. There were no children by this second marriage,

and the children by the first were out of the way, leaving the Larabees free to scrape together and save all the money they could.

"I suspect," Hugh answered, "that the streams just about here are whipped to death."

Mr. Larabee gave a shrewd glance at him, smiled grimly, and said, "That don't make no difference. Git some rubber boots that come up to your middle, and a pair of shot-away pants, and a coat with twenty-seven pockets, and a hat lined with green, and a pair o' gloves to keep your hands white; and you git a fifty dollar rod, and a ten dollar reel, and stuff a book full o' flies, and then you go a-fishin'. You won't ketch a minner; but you 'll look purty."

Monsieur Valrey's brows contracted at the crabbed, grumbling tone, but his face smoothed out when Hugh began to laugh. The conversation between Hugh and the farmer was kept up after supper, and renewed again the next morning. The day dawned gray and lowering, and Pauline scanned the sky anxiously, but the sun struggled away from a ragged cloud, and bathed the air in golden light. She and Hugh started for a walk down the road, Monsieur Valrey forbidding them to go far, and watching them from the porch. The strife between the sun and the clouds was kept up all day; at one minute the sun shone triumphant, the babbling brook laughed its loudest; the next, the heavy clouds dimmed the light, the laugh of the brook sank to a subdued mur-

mur, and then the inquiring note of a robin seemed to ask in the name of all nature whether rain was going to fall or not.

Hugh walked at Pauline's side in silence, listening partly to her eager words, partly to the whisper of the stream that ran close to the mountain road. The water was a clear brown, — just the color of Pauline's eyes, and her lover told her so. He was not sad, but the low-lying clouds, which hung motionless just above the tree tops, weighed him down a little. There was no breeze; the leaves hardly stirred, and the smoke from a charcoal burner's cabin rose up in a weak, waving line, as though it missed the guiding breath of some wayward wind. The loneliness of the forest was only deepened now and then by a little clearing, where some pitiful oats or buckwheat tried to hide the blackened stumps that thrust their peaks in sight, grim ghosts of what had once been the lords of the land. A sudden plash startled the air. In the stream, a wise old trout leaped up shaking a wicked fin at Hugh. Off more than one feathered hook had that trout flung himself; many a country boy's wriggling worm had he nibbled away, and gloated over the savory morsel in the coal shadow of his favorite pool. Again and again he sprang out of the brown water, until the ripples widened and broke in tiny waves on the pebbled bank. A little further up stream was an angler as old and wise as the trout, a stout man, with a face burnt red, and framed in iron-gray

whiskers. He had a lithe rod and he threw a fly deftly, so that it lit lightly on the ripple, only to be drawn off in a moment with a swish as the green-gray line cut the air. The angler smiled and nodded to Hugh, and held up four fingers without speaking a word.

"Do you suppose he really finds pleasure in standing in the water, trying to catch fish?" Pauline asked softly, too awed by the mysterious silence to laugh.

"Oh, it is n't the fish," Hugh answered, "it is the being out of doors. Hallo, he 's got one — a good one, too."

The old angler's face was very serious as he played the trout, letting it tire itself out by rushes and turns that swayed and bent the rod. It was a short struggle, and then the glistening little trout was taken off the hook with a loving touch, and, to Pauline's horror, slipped all dripping into the angler's jacket pocket. After that, the stream and the road were left to her and Hugh for a time, and it was a man who looked strangely out of place in that quiet spot who presently came towards them with quick, nervous steps. His dapper business suit, his polished boots, his stiff collar, his low crowned black hat, were suggestive only of Broadway. The lower part of his face was covered with a thick growth of dark beard which ran into a mustache that hid his mouth. The beard was cut short, and hinted at a square jaw such as a man with so resolute a brow must

have. He smiled when he drew near, and showed large, white, even teeth, and his smile went far towards making his face handsome for a moment.

Even in repose it was not forbidding, sombre as it was, for in the depths of his eyes lurked a humorous, friendly light.

"Ah, Langmuir," he said, and his voice had an agreeable baritone quality, "you here too?" and they shook hands.

"Miss Valrey, Mr. Prosper," said Hugh.

They paused at the roadside, and while the gentlemen were exchanging amenities, Pauline, who felt left out of the conversation, seated herself on a big stone in the shade. She had a parasol, and she began to push the lichens off the rock with the tip of it. She grew so interested in clearing a certain little crevice that she forgot Prosper, and looked up quickly, with a guilty blush, when he addressed himself to her.

"You enjoy the mountain air, Miss Valrey?" he had said.

"The mountain air," she repeated; "oh, yes, but it is so still. It seems as though something had been forgotten."

Her smile was rather wistful; she half expected that the roar of the town would rouse her from this dream. Prosper spoke of the hotel he was stopping at, and that was only a mile away.

"You ought to walk up there some day," he continued, "and see the view from the piazza."

So they talked in a halting fashion, Pauline going back absently to clearing the lichens out of

the crevice as soon as Hugh spoke and relieved her of the responsibility of making conversation. Prosper tried to interest her; he addressed her pointedly, and when she heard her name, she looked up each time in the same surprised way. She wished he would leave her to those lovely, coral-red lichens. At last he went away and she rose with a sigh of relief.

"He is very dull," she said.

"Dull?" Hugh echoed, "why, I thought he was downright brilliant. I never heard him talk so much. He was glad to see me. He does not know what on earth to do in the country, and the sight of my familiar countenance cheered him up immensely."

"He has spoiled everything," said Pauline, pettishly. "Look at the marks of his shoes in the road, crossing and re-crossing the tracks of some barefoot boy. Oh, he has spoiled everything with his slim shoes."

"He has a well-shaped foot," said Hugh.

She laughed derisively. "Yes, and stands so." She struck a manly attitude, one foot thrust forward, weight resting on the other; right hand behind the back, left hand toying with an imaginary watch chain.

"Ah, Miss Valrey, do you enjoy this mountain air?" she said.

Pose and tone were Prosper's to the life, and both Hugh and she laughed and laughed again; then strolled homeward, swinging hands like school-children.

VI.

"I WONDER," said Gilbert Prosper, "where Langmuir found that girl."

He spoke his thought aloud, and a squirrel paused half way down the trunk of a tree to listen; then whisked back again and watched the solitary gentleman from a branch that overhung the road. Prosper smiled, and throwing up his chin a little, clasped his hands behind his back and marched along briskly, whistling a street air, and keeping step to the tune. All that day he was in excellent spirits; he found no fault with the hotel; he tipped waiters and bootblacks generously, and went to bed at nine o'clock without grumbling, believing that the mountain air had done him a deal of good already. The next morning, however, he was reminded of his forty-first birthday by a letter from his half-sister, and her cheerful congratulations depressed him greatly. He neither felt old nor looked old, and it was startling to remember that he had passed more than half of the threescore and ten years allotted to man. With the letter and several newspapers in his hand, he strolled down the long piazza, and seating himself in a chair, tilted back until his toes just touched the flooring, and then gave him-

self up to contemplation of the scenery. It afforded him scant pleasure, for he frowned and pressed his teeth together so that the tiny tuft of hair under his lower lip stood out fiercely. Some children, who were playing tag, fell over his legs, and after one glance at his scowling face ran away from him as though he were an ogre out of a story book. He lighted a cigar which he chewed more than he smoked, meanwhile never taking his eyes off the smiling landscape, melting into the distant horizon. It was a sweeping view; a mile of forest was a mere dark patch, relieved by squares of cultivated fields, where clumps of woodland looked like tiny black specks in the seeming expanse of meadow. A flake of smoke was a village; a glitter was a lake; gentle undulations were mighty hills.

The piazzas of the hotel held scores of chattering groups that pleasant August morning, but the straying breeze took liberties with as many gray hairs and lace caps as with blonde curls and rakish Tam o' Shanters. The old and the elderly had the big wicker chairs; the young and the would-be young clung mostly to the railing, where they lounged and indulged in boundless banter. Sundry solitary bachelors like Prosper sulked and smoked, blind to the severe or appealing glances bestowed on them or on their arm-chairs. These bachelors were all utterly wretched, and rose only to slouch about with their hands in their pockets, looking hard askant at each other, and entering reluctantly into a conversation. They all had a

sneaking wish that the fortnight in the mountains was over, and it slipped past while they were making plans to go to the sea-shore. They did not belong to the happy tribe of sportsmen; rod, gun, and dog were just so many forms of idiotic folly to them. At evening, when the band played in the big parlor, and young men and maidens danced, these sneering bachelors chewed cigars on the dusky piazza, and reviled the merry-makers with a ferocity born of shyness and nourished by envy. A rubicund gentleman of fifty excited their deep derision, for he was the youngest man in the house. He waltzed with his daughters, he led the Virginia Reel, he played tennis, and conducted himself generally in an absurdly hilarious fashion. It was he who entertained a group of young people, while Prosper sat near scowling over his sister's letter.

"Now, girls, what is on the *tapis* to-day?" he cried.

This question evoked great laughter and babble. A vivacious creature in white muslin answered it when the chatter had subsided somewhat.

"Why, Mr. Quimby, we are waiting for you to tell us, of course. You don't suppose we are going to try to make plans while you are here? Propose something delightful."

"Then I propose to you, Miss Nellie. That is delightful, is n't it?"

"Depends on what she says," cried one.

"If Mrs. Quimby heard that!" cried another.

"You proposed to me, yesterday," pouted a blue-eyed sylph.

"Dear me, did I?" said Mr. Quimby. "Why are you are all so charming?"

"Because we can't help it," went up the soprano chorus.

"To drive us crazy," sounded the bass; then soprano and bass mingled in rollicking laughter, while Gilbert Prosper thought what fools they were. He heard them plan to go to Buttermilk Falls; he heard so much about Buttermilk Falls that he rose and walked away. The group was silent for a moment and then shrieks of delight pierced the air, and Prosper grimly supposed that he had furnished material for some asinine remark. Yes, they were fools undoubtedly was his morose reflection, but he wished he was a fool too. He stood at the head of the steps for a minute, irresolute whether to go up to his room or not, but at last he ran down the steps and struck into a quick walk which soon carried him away from the noisy hotel to the quiet mountain road. Had any one asked him where he was going, he would have answered that he did not know, but his gait was not such as a man adopts for an aimless ramble. Moreover, his restless eyes strayed hither and thither in search, and when he caught sight of a petticoat vanishing down a side-path, he strode that way, to the great discomfiture of a young lady whose hand was in a youth's temporary keeping. Prosper retreated hastily and pursued his

search. It is at twenty or forty that a man is most likely to follow up a pretty face, and he wanted another look at his clerk's sweetheart. When he came to the stone whereon she had sat the day before, he paused, and remembering how she had glanced up at him, he smiled. Then he went on again until he came to a shrimp-pink house. There in the shade of the trees she sat sewing, while her lover lay on the grass at her feet, reading aloud. From the piazza these two were watched by an old gentleman who had a thick pad of paper on his knee, and seemed to be drawing in a lazy, desultory fashion.

Pauline bowed to Prosper; it was a bow which gave no invitation, but he lifted the gate latch and advanced boldly.

Hugh greeted him, got him a chair, and shot at Pauline a droll glance that luckily the guest did not intercept.

"I am lonesome up at the hotel," said Prosper, frankly. "I don't know a soul, and please don't regard me as an intruder, Miss Valrey."

"Oh, we don't," she cried, with all the warmth that charming woman puts into a fib.

"Perhaps you think a bachelor has no business to be lonesome or homesick, but a girl sent off to boarding-school could not be much more wretched than I," Prosper continued. "What makes it worse is that everybody else has lots of fun. Now a party of people are going off to Buttermilk Falls to-day. I am consumed with a desire to see But-

termilk Falls. If I get a wagon, will you go there to-morrow with me? "

He looked at her, then at Hugh, and they both politely expressed the pleasure it would give them to see Buttermilk Falls. Prosper talked about it, quoting the sportive Quimby largely, and becoming extremely animated. He did not linger too long, and when he rose to take leave, Pauline gave him her hand.

" You must come here and be cheered up when you are lonesome," she said, sweetly.

" Oh, thanks, but take care what you say, Miss Valrey. Man is very selfish and is glad to be happy, even at the expense of others' generosity."

He bowed and retreated, feeling that he had covered himself with glory, but Hugh hastened after him.

" I beg your pardon," he said, " but if we go to Buttermilk Falls, Monsieur Valrey must go too."

" Ask him by all means, and my compliments to him. He is the old gentleman on the piazza, I suppose."

" Yes — a Frenchman — an artist. They, the Valreys, and I board at the same place. I am going to marry Miss Valrey as soon as I get enough to take care of a wife."

Prosper shook him by the hand.

" I suspected that — a lovely girl, and I congratulate you. Any more young ladies over in your boarding-house? "

" There is a widow, fair, fat, and considerably more than forty."

"I leave her to Monsieur Valrey," Prosper returned, with a grimace.

When Hugh went back to Pauline, she said, —

"I like him to-day; I ought not to have mimicked him, the poor old thing. Really, I felt sorry for him."

"He would be pleased to hear you pity him, the poor old thing," Hugh remarked.

"It is very good of him to take us off to see those Falls," she added.

"Pure philanthropy," said Hugh.

She caught the accent of dissatisfaction in his voice.

"You know we could not go alone, dear."

"Of course not."

"And it is just as you said yesterday," she continued. "Mr. Prosper does not know how to amuse himself here in the country, and the sight of you cheered him up. If you had only had a ledger under your nose he would have felt still more at home, probably."

When Papa Valrey heard of the proposed drive to the Falls, he was vastly pleased. Patting Hugh on the shoulder, he whispered, half-closing one eye wickedly: —

"Mr. Prosper likes you, that is very clear. You have won his esteem, and if you play your cards well, he may show his regard for you before long."

To Hugh's sanguine mind this sounded reasonable. The idea that the Gilbert Prosper he knew

was willing to give himself trouble merely for the sake of looking at a girl's fresh face seemed impossible, yet he could not quite believe that it was out of sheer affection for his clerk that Prosper had proposed the drive. It annoyed him a little, too, that Pauline should be indebted to any one but him for a pleasure. This ungenerous thought he banished as soon as it took shape. She had not many pleasures, and he resolved to be glad that she should receive them from anybody who could bestow them on her.

Meanwhile, Prosper had reached the hotel once more, and he wrote his sister a letter, a favor he was not prone to confer. He did not love her over-much. She was his sister on the spindle side, and her father he had not loved at all. While his wife lived, Mr. Berryan had treated her son well enough, but as soon as she was in her grave, he placed Gilbert in a merchant's office, and washed his hands of the boy as completely as he could. Therefore, Gilbert grew up poor and his sister rich. Once he had ventured to apply to Mr. Berryan for the loan of a small sum which he needed to set himself up in business, and Mr. Berryan refused the request. This rankled deep in Prosper's heart. He never forgave his step-father, and when he found himself the executor of Mr. Berryan's estate, he took a sort of fierce pleasure in caring for the money of a man he had hated. Not a penny had been left to him; it all went to Jane Berryan, who was at the time of her

father's death a plain young woman, aged twenty-nine. She lived about among aunts and uncles for a while; she went to Europe; but finally she settled down in New York by herself, her brother having refused to make his home with her. He dined with her scrupulously every Sunday, gave her advice when she asked for it, and smiled cynically at the easy way in which a spinster could, alone and unaided, dispose of a large income.

Having written her a letter, acknowledging her remembrance of his birthday, he strolled among the morose bachelors, soothed by a sense of immense superiority, and he viewed the young ladies with a critical eye, finding not one to equal Mademoiselle Valrey in appearance or manner. He studied the sky the last thing before he went to bed; he consulted the hotel proprietor upon the probabilities of a storm, and early the next morning he drew his window curtains aside to see what manner of day was dawning. The haze rolled up the mountain sides, and one by one the sharp peaks came in sight. He dispatched his breakfast in a tremendous hurry, and then saw that a good luncheon was stowed away in the big mountain wagon he had hired. He fussed about like an old woman; he insisted upon rugs and cushions; he inspected the horses and harness critically, and tried the brake. It was not often that Gilbert Prosper entertained friends, and to give an out-door luncheon was something he had never attempted before, and he was resolved, as he him-

self expressed it, "to do the thing up in good shape." He had the steward, the clerk, and several waiters flying to and fro, and a knot of people on the piazza watched the preparations with grave interest, one college student imitating the drawing of a cork when some bottles of wine were placed in the wagon. Finally, Prosper took his seat and the horses trotted off to the farm-house, where Monsieur Valrey was waiting on the porch in a fever of impatience. He called Pauline; he stamped his foot when she did not come; he apologized to Prosper; he called Pauline again, and when she appeared he scolded her for keeping Mr. Prosper waiting. She only laughed and ran off to pick a few of the old-fashioned pink roses that bloomed in the grass-grown yard. Then Mr. Prosper must have a flower in his coat, and Hugh must have one, and her father, too. Monsieur submitted in a sort of resigned despair to his daughter's vagaries, and she bade him smile, which he did in a perfunctory way, whereupon she kissed him on either cheek as a reward for his obedience. Prosper watched her every motion, and patted the friendly dog until the brute rose on his hind legs and planted his fore-paws on the breast of this amiable new-comer.

"He 's covered you with mud," said Hugh, and he dashed into the house after a whisk broom, and brushed Prosper's coat under Pauline's directions. Monsieur wrung his hands.

"Will we never start?" he groaned.

They did start at last, but only after Monsieur had bowed to Prosper, and Prosper had bowed to Monsieur, each motioning the other to the back seat of the wagon; and so much politeness was shown that the driver good-naturedly remarked that they had better hurry up if they meant to get to Buttermilk Falls. When the party was under way, this driver bore the brunt of the entertainment. He was a dried-up, elderly man, of wide experience, who had once driven a chariot in Barnum's Circus, and he told how six horses had run away with him and the Goddess of Liberty and the baby lion. Prosper encouraged him to talk, and afterward gave him a two dollar bill to pay for the amusement he had afforded.

They reached the Falls about noon, and Monsieur at once made a sketch of the tumbling, foaming, water, and the gray rocks. Underneath the sketch he wrote: —

A Monsieur Prosper, amateur de la belle nature,
Hommage respecteux de PAUL VALREY.

This he presented to his host, who thanked him with such effusion that Hugh, who was helping the driver unload the wagon, nearly dropped a bottle of claret.

"Well, Prosper is a gay old boy, is n't he?" he whispered to Pauline. "He and your father have been bowing and scraping ever since they made each other's acquaintance. A regular pair of Turveydrops!"

Pauline, who had no notion what a Turvey-

drop might be, nodded and smiled, and hastened to assist Prosper to lay the cloth. Of course it was discovered that the spoons had been forgotten; of course nobody had a cork-screw, and bottles' necks must be broken; and of course Pauline shrieked when a little snake whisked over her ankle. They ate, drank, and were very merry. Indeed, they betrayed so plainly that a picnic was a delightful and novel event to them that the driver told his stable companions on his return that he guessed them folks had n't eat cold chicken out-doors before in their lives.

Pauline showed her pleasure like a happy child, and Prosper felt how sweet it was to give a lovely girl a bit of enjoyment. He scraped his knees scrambling up rocks to get a flower for her, he drenched his cuffs and coat sleeves dipping water out of the spring for her, he chased away the ants that ventured on the rugs he had spread for her to sit on, and he was busy, radiant, and a trifle ridiculous. With Monsieur Valrey he was deferential, with Hugh he was fraternal, and with the driver, jocose. In an idle moment he plucked a blade of grass, laid it between his thumbs, then blew a shrill whistle through his hollowed hands. This struck Hugh as so exquisitely comic that he doubled up in silent laughter, and glanced at Pauline. She saw nothing droll in the performance; she only plucked a blade of grass, too, and puffed her cheeks out in earnest imitation.

"Try again," said Prosper. "Now look at me."

He repeated his triumph, but Pauline tried and tried in vain. A spirit of emulation seized Monsieur Valrey, and he must needs make an effort to outdo his host. All three were quite grave until Pauline saw the absurdity of it, then she burst into a peal of laughter that mingled with the rush of the water over the rocks and filled the air with a gleeful din. Her father looked at her in astonishment.

"Oh, papa," she cried, "if you could have seen yourself!"

"But, my dear," he returned, seriously, "I whistled as well as Mr. Prosper." But at this she only laughed the harder, and turning to Prosper, the old gentleman added, with an indulgent smile, "Young people find everything funny."

"That 's so," said Prosper; and, to prove his own giddy, thoughtless youth, he laughed his heartiest.

Hugh picked up a stone, which he threw with such unerring aim at a red leaf hanging high on a tree, a vivid patch against the green, that the leaf fluttered down to the ground. His success pleased him and excited the others to do likewise, so they all began to throw stones at everything, — Pauline with the misdirected energy of a person who is resolved to make strenuous efforts tell in some way, and her stones took most amazing curves. The air was full of missiles; the driver's head was in jeopardy until, in self defense, he proposed the honored game of duck-on-a-rock, and this ended the sports of the day.

They drove home in the cool of early evening, meeting cows returning to pasture; the wandering one with a bell at her neck that gave a clink, clank, the jumping one with a yoke on her neck which lent a look of long-suffering to her meek head. The moon rose up, a great yellow disk, that when one remembered her sometime slim curve looked as though she had passed out of delicate girlhood into buxom middle age. Pauline sang a song that she had learned from her mother. The notes were simple and rose and fell in a monotonous chant.

"Amour à la fermière! elle est
Si gentille et si douce!
C'est l'oiseau des bois qui se plaît
Loin du bruit, dans la mousse.
Vieux vagabond qui tends la main,
Enfant pauvre et sans mère,
Puissiez-vous trouver en chemin
La ferme et la fermière!"

Monsieur softly beat time with his hand, and when she stopped, he said, —

"It is long since I heard that. I should have thought you had forgotten it, Pauline. Do you remember

'Enfant, si tu dors,
Les anges alors
T'apporteront mille choses.'

It used always put you to sleep."

"Sing it," said Prosper; but she pointed to the farm-house that was close at hand, and the friendly dog barked a welcome home to the revelers.

On his way to the hotel, Prosper tried to whistle the tune of "La ferme et la fermière," but failed lamentably and lighted a cigar for consolation. The driver turned half way round to remark that he always liked French folks; some could n't abide 'em, but he found 'em uncommon easy to git on with, and they took such genuine pleasure in everything. That there solemn old gent was tickled 'most to death to go to a picnic, and his daughter, now, she was a re'l nice young lady; she wa'n't pretty right off, but she was the kind that kept on growin' pretty while you was thinkin' she wa'n't much to look at after all. Whereupon Prosper gave him a fine cigar to stop his tongue, but the driver put it into his pocket with thanks, adding that he would hold that over till he had time to give all his mind to it. He said no more, however; only the steady beat of the horses' hoofs broke the silence. Up rose the hotel, twinkling with lights. The band was playing "Heimliche Liebe" in waltz measure, and the dancers floated past the open windows. Prosper watched them a long time. The couples came out one by one to walk up and down the piazzas in the moonlight, and sometimes a pair flitted away to friendly shadows. The music, the moonlight, the rustle of women's dress, something intoxicated him, and he did not go to his room until the servants began to put out lights and distracted mothers hunted straying daughters out of dark corners.

He did not go to the shrimp-pink farm-house

the next day, but on the day after that he drove thither in the mountain wagon. Monsieur Valrey was alone on the piazza.

"My daughter and Mr. Langmuir are not far away," he said. "It may be that they are on the lake. I will find them."

But this Prosper would not allow. It was enough for him to be shown the path, and he strode down it quickly. The lake was a mere pond, made by the damming up of the creek, and Hugh was pulling Pauline about it in a skiff that had been painted to match the house. She was saying, —

"I don't see why he does n't adopt you, Hugh. He has no children. And at any rate, he might raise your salary. Perhaps he would, if I asked him to. I will mention it — delicately."

"Don't you dare!" Hugh exclaimed.

She shook her head mischievously.

"I do dare. Where is the harm? Does he know about me?"

"What about you?"

"Oh, Hugh, don't act as if you were stupid! I mean does he know that we are to be married?"

"Yes, I told him."

"And what did he say?"

"He said he would come over to Harloe Row and court Mrs. Terry."

Pauline looked reproachful. She put her hand into the water, then flung the drops against Hugh's provoking face.

Prosper reached the pond just in time to see her do it, to see Hugh shake his head like a dog, and to hear them both laugh. He was about to call to them when Hugh suddenly pulled the skiff around a wooded point, and Prosper turned back, a dull flush spreading over his face. Even quicker than he had come did he return to the house, his heavy brows meeting in an ominous frown. He was touchy, and he believed that Hugh had seen him and avoided him.

"The jealous young fool," he muttered.

Monsieur Valrey greeted him with an inquiring smile. "And did you not find my daughter and Mr. Langmuir?"

"No; I only called, any way, to say good-by. I am off for New York."

"Ah, indeed," said Monsieur. "You men of affairs have little time to spend in the country. Good-by, Mr. Prosper. Permit me to thank you for the pleasure you have given to us all."

"That was nothing," said Prosper, hastily; and then he climbed into his mountain wagon and was driven up the road. The slight that he fancied had been put upon him rankled in his heart, and he could only think over and over again what a jealous young fool his clerk was. When he reached the hotel, he found that the coach would start in an hour for the village, and that he would be able to take an evening train to New York, so he packed his satchel at once and paid his bill, although it had not been his intention to leave that

day, or the next. He was the only passenger, and he seated himself by the driver on the coach. The four horses trotted along at a smart pace, and presently the shrimp-pink farm-house came in sight. Pauline and Hugh were sauntering towards it, and they bowed to Prosper in amazement, but he imagined there was a look of triumph in his clerk's face. The idiocy of it all struck Prosper, the idiocy and the cruelty, for that jealous young beggar was bent on marrying a wife when he could only just support himself. Like the Venner of Kuhschnappel, Prosper stood ready to take the poor by the hand, and especially the lovely poor.

VII.

"MR. PROSPER called to bid us good-by," said Monsieur Valrey, when Hugh and Pauline returned to the house, "and he went to the lake in search of you, but failed to find you."

"Then he must have been blind," said Hugh. "We were there all the afternoon. Perhaps, though, we were around the point, getting flowers. Still, if he had hallooed, we should have heard him."

"I am sorry we missed him," said Pauline. "I like him, and I meant to ask him to take Hugh into partnership."

She spoke lightly, but she did have a vague notion that perhaps she could prevail upon Gilbert Prosper to better her lover's position somewhat, and she resolved to use her influence if an opportunity ever offered itself. She might meet Mr. Prosper in the street; or he might some time come and see them at Mrs. Terry's, although this did not seem probable. To her, the President of the Essex Manufacturing Company was a mighty potentate, affable and condescending, however, whose benignant smile could work wonders for one of his humble subjects.

The last few days in the country slipped past,

and Mrs. Terry welcomed her boarders back to Harloe Row. In the middle of September, Pauline's duties began at the school, but they were irksome, and she longed for a home of her own; not the magnificent home of the far-off future that Hugh was so fond of talking about, but a home of a few rooms where she would dust the parlor herself. She built air castles as she went to and from Madam Kenyon's, and sometimes her attention wandered when she was hearing a class drone out verbs. Her heart was no longer in her work. She dreamed of an ideal kitchen with shining tins standing on the shelves, and one day as she passed a second-hand book-stall, she bought a big French cook-book for half a dollar. It was the ambitious work of Monsieur Francatelli, and she was not a little dismayed to find that the groundwork of most savory soups was two old hens and a fat hare, and she wondered what a cook did with the whites of a dozen eggs when only the yolks were used. There was a diagram of an ox to show from what parts of the animal beef was cut, and she regarded the Sunday rib-roasts with grave interest, trying to fit them into the diagram. Mrs. Terry discovered the cook-book, and although it was in French, she knew well enough what it was and what it meant, and she rallied Pauline at the table about her efforts to acquire a knowledge of housekeeping.

"You need n't worry," she said in conclusion, "keeping house will be as easy as an old shoe, for

here in New York you git everything ready to your hand, but in the country it 's different."

Hugh spoke up rather sharply.

"I don't expect my wife to cook for me," he said.

His words were touched with a grandiloquence which belied him. He felt humble, dispirited, for he not only did not expect his wife to cook for him, but could not see how he was to marry a wife at all. He was disappointed to find that Mr. Prosper was just as formal to him as he had been before they met in the mountains; the head book-keeper showed no signs of leaving, and poor Hugh saw not the shadow of a chance of bettering his fortune. Where were the young men he had read about, who no sooner put their foot on the lowest round of the ladder than they were able to climb up higher? Of what avail was his patience, his perseverance, his energy? Anybody could do his work; he felt that he was capable of better things.

Pauline hoarded a little out of her wages, too, against the time that she should buy a wedding-dress. She was resolved not to be married in any furbished up old gown; she would have something new, something soft and white, like her mother's wedding-dress. That had gone, well she remembered when and how, child that she was at the time. It had been sold to help pay the rent one hard, biting winter ten years ago. And she remembered her mother's tears, her father's sighs.

She prayed, no one ever knew how fervently, that no child of hers might look back on such a sad day as that.

Papa Valrey was aware that his daughter was laying by a little money, and he made her unexpected presents of boots and gloves, although he would not let her imagine that he understood why she had become so niggardly, so careful of her pennies. Such secrets were sweet; she should never suspect how clearly he saw into the sacred precincts of her heart. He had two thousand dollars in the bank for her, and he hoped he would live long enough to give the money to her on her wedding-day. The desire to live grew stronger and stronger as he felt his strength failing.

One night when they parted at her bed-room door, he kissed her in a passion of tenderness.

"I hope I shall see you and Hugh happy before long," he said, "and in a home of your own."

"But we are happy now," she returned.

Hugh came running up the stairs. The hall was dimly lighted by a single gas jet that flared and flickered in the draught.

"I do not want to die yet," cried the old man, all his self-control giving way. "I want to live my youth over again in yours; to see you prospering as I never prospered. Am I to go down to my grave without knowing if you are to have a bright life or a sad one? I cannot. I will not."

They looked at him in wonder.

"Hugh," he added, "don't fail; fight your way;

be a stronger man than I. Do you hear me, Hugh?"

He turned and went into his room, and they heard the bolt slip.

The appeal fell like lead on Hugh's heart, for he was powerless to do more than he was doing. He could not sleep that night for many a long hour, and when sleep did come, it brought troubled dreams. He saw Pauline in the little boat on the mountain lake, and while he stood on the bank calling, calling, she drifted away from him. He plunged into the water, he was swimming, putting forth all his might, but the boat danced over the waves, always beyond his reach, and Pauline was smiling joyously and waving her hand. At last he made one mad effort and woke. Outside, a cart rattled over the stones, the shrill cry of a milk vendor pierced the air, and from the Avenue came the light tinkle of car-bells. He stretched out his arms in an agony of longing, then rose to dress for the work that gave him meagre rewards and held forth no promise.

"You look ill," Pauline said to him when she met him in the hall.

"Oh, I had a horrible dream; it hangs over me yet."

"You are tired — poor Hugh! How heavy your eyes are! But you must not be cast down by a bad dream."

"It is n't only that, Pauline. I am so weak, so helpless. I can't do what I want to. There

does n't seem to be any chance of my rising an inch."

"Shame on you!" she cried. "You think of money, not of me. I don't want so much money; I should not know what to do with it. If we were very rich, I could never do anything for you; you would despise neckties of my making."

She took off his faded scarf and slipping a new one about his neck, knotted it deftly as he had taught her. He felt her soft hands on his throat and the touch soothed him.

On the afternoon of that day, Pauline went to read French with her one private pupil, but she found the young lady in no mood to sit down meekly and have her accent corrected. The family had suddenly decided to go South; the young lady was very sorry she had given Mademoiselle Valrey the trouble of coming to the house; she had meant to send word, but had not had a minute's time. And a friend of hers, Miss Berryan, would be glad to have Mademoiselle call to arrange about giving instructions to a little girl. Pauline's face lit up at the sound of the name. She remembered what Hugh had told her about Gilbert Prosper's rich maiden sister, and in the twinkling of an eye it flashed upon her that through Miss Berryan she might see Hugh's employer again, and use feminine arts and wiles for the bettering of her lover's fortunes. She concocted a dozen schemes while she stood listening to a hasty account of the spinster and the spin-

ster's adopted daughter. She saw herself persuading Mr. Prosper to make Hugh head book-keeper, raise his salary, do something or other so that the poor fellow could lift up his head and be happy once more. A visiting-card was thrust into her hand, and with a beating heart she bade her pupil farewell, and left her to the packing of the great trunks that yawned open on every side.

Pauline did not stop to ask advice of her father or Madam Kenyon, but went directly to Miss Berryan's house. It was one of a row in Fifth Avenue, a narrow, stone-faced building, with tier on tier of curtained windows. A man-servant showed her into a drawing-room and she made her way through a wilderness of little tables to a pale blue satin chair, the most modest of an assorted variety. Miss Berryan had taste, but rather too keen an appreciation of the beautiful, and as she bought anything that struck her fancy, and pretty gimcracks are plenty, her house was crammed full of pictures and bronzes, glass and china, which it was one of her amusements to change about. She shifted her furniture so often that her friends could never be sure of finding a favorite chair in some corner. Beyond the drawing-room was a library, then a dining-room, each separated from the other by embroidered hangings, fresh from the Decorative Art Association.

There was a quick step over Pauline's head, a murmur of voices, and then Miss Berryan came down the stairs swiftly, and entered the draw-

ing-room. She was a thick-set woman, the sort Byron hated, with a good-humored, florid face that hinted at a long succession of solid dinners. She was not pretty, she never had been pretty; and in looking at her, one saw at a glance that she would grow into a coarse, heavy old dame. Her hair was flaxen, and so were her eyebrows and lashes, and she had rather more than her due share of chin and jowl. Like her brother, however, she had fine teeth, and there was a brisk, hearty air about her that was pleasing, although it was not quite feminine. Her eyes were a clear, pale blue, at once shrewd and kindly in expression, and her full lips were curved in a friendly smile. Her dress fitted her square figure to perfection, and she held out a thick, white, well-cared for hand to Pauline.

"Yes, Miss Valrey," she said, in a voice that had what an actor would call good "carrying" qualities, "I rather thought you 'd be along today, and I am real glad you came, for Jennie, that 's my little girl, only not my own, for I am not married, you know, thank goodness, but my cousin's child I have adopted, though my brother Gilbert did n't think it was right — Why, see here, you must be cold sitting there by that window. Let 's go into the library."

Pauline followed her meekly, and Miss Berryan never ceased talking as she led the way to the adjoining room.

There was a cheerful open fire in the library,

which got its name from a carved case full of books, and a massive writing table, and Miss Berryan gave Pauline a plush arm-chair, a foot-stool, and a hand-screen. She took another hand-screen as she seated herself in a rocking chair of fantastic pattern, and with this held between her face and the fire, she tilted back and forth, slowly, giving out a flow of rambling talk.

"You see, I used to go to Madam Kenyon's school, and Madam and I are such great friends, that I heard about you before Miss Fitzpatrick mentioned you to me; and I thought if you had time to teach Jennie French and drawing, I would be so glad, for I don't mean to send her to school, but have her learn here at home; and a lady comes every day, though only to teach English branches, and I must look up a music teacher, and perhaps you know of a good one — a lady, of course, for it would n't do to have a young man, or an old man either, running here all the time, I being an unprotected spinster, you know."

She broke off to laugh comfortably, and Pauline caught her breath.

"There is Fraulein Bosch," she began, "who gives lessons at Madam Kenyon's" —

"That old frump!" cried Miss Berryan; "why, I would n't have her around. Of course it is n't her fault that she is crooked and got red hair and sniffs all the time, poor thing, and I am truly sorry for her, but I could n't stand her, Miss Valrey; indeed I could n't. I ain't so good-look-

ing myself as to want any other duddy old maids in the house, though, thank goodness, my hair isn't red, and my shoulders are straight; but I have an eye for beauty, I guess, and Fraulein Bosch would just give me the creeps. Brr!"

She shuddered, and laying her hands on her knees in a masculine fashion, leaned forward and looked at Pauline. Like many another plain spinster, Miss Berryan had, as she herself confessed, an eye for beauty in women, and being of an independent nature, strong and self-reliant, she was drawn at once to a shy, pretty girl who seemed in need of help. There was little of the feminine longing in her for the protection and support of a man; there was, instead, much of a man's instinct to succor the weak, to put an arm about those whose footsteps were wavering. Her impulses found vent in various channels. She was educating two or three poor cousins, she gave largely to charity, but it was her foible to take up young girls and heap kindnesses upon them until they proved ungrateful, or she grew tired of them. Her last *protégée* had turned out such a sad failure that she was discouraged for a time, and inveighed bitterly against the deceitfulness of the world. She studied Pauline closely; she tried to be formal and business-like, but the French maiden's soft, beseeching eyes and tremulous smile won the spinster's heart; she cast prudence to the winds, and gave herself up to the pleasure of falling in love. As for Pauline, she was confused

and bewildered, and when Miss Berryan drew closer to her and patted her hand, she did not know whether she ought to smile or frown. Miss Berryan became earnest and excited; her voice rose higher and higher; her eyes dilated and seemed to start out of her head, and her words stumbled over each other and got into a tangle, so that she finally had to stop and begin again. By that time she was imploring Pauline to teach Jennie, and she offered a sum in payment that made Pauline think her a little mad.

"Now do promise to come, Miss Valrey, and I want you as much on my account as Jennie's, to cheer me up a little, you know, for I do get a bit lonesome once in a while, I must confess. You see I don't care for society, and I rarely go anywhere, except to a few houses where I am quite at home, and I don't have a 'day' or try to keep up a position. There is so much vulgar show in New York, everybody trying to outdo everybody else, that it quite disgusts me. It is nothing but money, money, money, and it makes me sick to hear folks talk about family; and the folks that talk the most were the very ones that went on their knees to get invitations to the Blunderby ball last winter, and first they turned up their noses at the Blunderbys, and now they are scrambling to marry the Blunderby boys. Why, Willie Requester married one of 'em, — one of the girls I mean, — and everybody knows what the Requesters are, or at least what they think they

are, though their great-grandfather was an old clo' dealer in the Bowery."

Miss Berryan chuckled and turned a pigeon blood ruby, set in a dull gold band, round her stumpy finger, slowly. She talked a good deal, but she did not talk so foolishly after all, and Pauline's heart softened towards her. Presently Jennie came in, a golden-haired girl of eleven or twelve years, with a baby skin and mouth. Her large, violet-hued eyes were set rather too close together, and there was an unchildish gleam in their depths. She had been brought up by parents who tried to make a brave show on a narrow income, and Jennie, one of five children, had already imbibed a good deal of worldly wisdom. She was quite alive to the beauty of living in a brown-stone front house in Fifth Avenue, and to the supreme necessity of retaining the first place in her cousin Jane's heart and purse. Although she greeted Pauline very prettily, she regarded her with some degree of suspicion.

"Don't you let anybody get ahead of you," had been her mother's farewell advice, and the demure, angel-faced maiden was quite determined that nobody ever should get ahead of her in this life. Little Jennie knew all about her cousin Jane's propensity for helping poor girls; she had heard it sneered at by her parents, who lived rent-free in a house that cousin Jane owned in Troy; and she knew that this Miss Valrey was poor, because her gloves were only three-but-

toned, and mended at that. Therefore, she regarded her with suspicion, which grew deeper as she saw how fond her cousin was already of this strange woman.

"Jennie, I hope this lady will give you lessons in French and drawing," said Miss Berryan.

"And I hope so, too," said Jennie, with a sweet smile. "I want so much to learn French and drawing."

Miss Berryan kissed the child rapturously, and the child arranged her tumbled golden locks at the mirror, while her cousin was showing Miss Valrey to the door.

Pauline hurried home, only pausing at Madam Kenyon's for a minute to ask leave to give the private lessons, for her time was by courtesy at Madam Kenyon's disposal, and her request was granted graciously. When she stepped out of the car on the corner of First Avenue and Harloe Row, she was forced to make her way round a crowd gathered by a quarrel between two infuriated women. The sound of their voices frightened her so that she half ran to Mrs. Terry's door, which she had no sooner opened than she was greeted by a smell of something burning in the kitchen. Certainly life was sweeter and smoother in a brown-stone front in Fifth Avenue, and Pauline thought of the flowers in Miss Berryan's dusky drawing-room with something akin to a pang of new-born envy.

VIII.

"WELL, Jane," said Prosper, when he walked into his sister's house on Sunday, "how are you?"

"Oh, I am well, thanks; and, Gilbert, I have finally found somebody to teach Jennie French and drawing — such a sweet girl, and the prettiest manners!"

"Another, eh?" He laughed a little and dropped down in the nearest chair. There was a magazine on the table and he turned over the pages idly, glancing at the wood-cuts, while his sister talked.

"But she has not come to me, Gilbert, with any pitiful story, and she is not an impostor, for Madam Kenyon has known her ever so long, and she teaches there, but having a little spare time, she takes a few private pupils, and I am so glad I found her. She is just what I wanted, a lady, and she will have a good influence on Jennie, besides being able to teach her, and she is pretty, too, not a beauty or anything of that sort, but gentle and refined."

"The most dangerous kind," Prosper murmured. "For Heaven's sake, Jane, do be a trifle cautious about the women you take into the house."

"I am not going to take her into the house; she is only coming here three times a week, and Madam Kenyon knows her and knows her father, and they are very nice people indeed, quite out of the ordinary run, and Miss Fitzpatrick used to have her" —

"Yes, this is very fine," Prosper broke in again, "but the last lovely and refined creature you picked up had all manner of credentials — forged, every one of them. Of course you will do as you please, but remember I warned you."

Miss Berryan gazed at him in helpless irritation.

"If you could see her!" she exclaimed.

"Would she captivate me, too, this bewitching school ma'am?"

He smiled in a mocking, provoking way, and shook his head.

"Oh, Gilbert, you are perfectly exasperating, and ridiculous, too. Why, everybody knows the Valreys, and old Monsieur Valrey has taught" —

"Who? What's the name?"

"Valrey — it's French, and it is Miss Valrey who is coming here to teach Jennie, and you have no business to cast such mean slurs on a girl you never saw; and she is a lady, and she is lovely, and you may say what you like."

"I have seen her," Prosper returned.

"You have? Why didn't you tell me? And where? And she isn't bad, Gilbert!"

"Bad? No. You ought to have told me it

was Miss Valrey. Of course she is a lady, and a very charming one to boot. I met her up in the Catskills last summer; she was there with her — father. Oh, you have made no mistake this time, Jane."

"But why did n't you say you knew her?"

"You never mentioned the name, and surely it is not necessary for me to run and tell you every time I make the acquaintance of a stray young lady, is it?"

His smile was no longer mocking, and he laid the magazine on the table. "And she is to teach Jennie French, eh?" he continued. "Comes two or three times in the week?"

"Three times, and on Saturdays I mean to keep her to luncheon with me, and we can go to a matinée afterward, for I don't believe she has much fun, and I never have anybody to go to matinées with me, and I know better than to ask you to take me to the theatre in the evening."

"Did I ever refuse?" he asked, mildly. "Any time you want to go, say the word."

She clasped her hands in rapture. "And we might take her," she cried.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Take all the girls you please, only let me know how many boxes I am to secure, or perhaps I could buy up the whole parquet."

Miss Berryan was charmed to find her brother in such a playful frame of mind, and she arranged forthwith that he should take her and Miss Val-

rey to Wallack's on Thursday evening to see "Old Heads and Young Hearts."

"Better ask her to stop over night," he said. "Heaven knows where she lives."

When Miss Berryan told him, he pulled a wry face.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "Why don't they have a raft in the East River and be done with it; and they could push up in Newtown Creek, that sweet stream, of a pleasant evening, to enjoy the balmy odors of sludge acid. Why, Jane, it is death and destruction for her to live there!"

He was so horrified that he was ready to join a society for the suppression of bad smells in the city of New York, and he agreed with his sister that poor Miss Valrey ought to be rescued from her unsavory surroundings.

Early Monday morning, he stepped into his tailor's and told him to have a dress suit done by Wednesday night. Prosper had not felt the necessity of evening clothes in more years than he liked to remember, and he had given his old swallow-tail coat away, but he would not disgrace his sister and Miss Valrey by going to the theatre with them in a frock coat. Although he impressed it upon his tailor that the suit must be in readiness by Wednesday, when on that day he inquired of the clerk of the hotel where he lived if a package had come for him, the answer was a shake of the head. Full of wrath, he paid the faithless tailor a visit the next morning and raised a tre-

mendous storm. The clothes were promised at noon, but at five o'clock they had not yet been sent to his rooms. He fretted and fumed. He was due at his sister's at six sharp, and he had bitterly resigned himself to a Prince Albert coat, just as the new clothes were brought to his door. He donned the broadcloth in feverish haste, tied his cravat with trembling fingers, called a cab, jumped into it, bade the man drive like the devil, and then told himself that he was the greatest ass in New York.

He found the ladies waiting for him in the drawing-room, and he shook each by the hand warmly, but he only assured Pauline of the pleasure it gave him to see her; he made no allusion to their meeting in the Catskills; he ignored Hugh's very existence, and while he politely inquired into the state of Monsieur Valrey's health, he did it in a formal, perfunctory fashion. Pauline eyed him timidly. She wondered how she had ever had the audacity to suppose that she could persuade him to raise Hugh's salary.

"Don't you think Wallack's Theatre the prettiest in town?" he said to her, quite as though she were a young lady who went to dinners and plays every night in the week.

"I never was in it," she answered.

"What, never?" he exclaimed, whereat his sister laughed helplessly, and Pauline laughed, too, for, thanks to Mrs. Terry, she recognized the wornout nonsense.

But to Prosper, this was simply outrageous. Why had nobody ever taken her to Wallack's and to all the rest of the theatres, and to the Academy of Music? He might have included the Metropolitan Museum and the Lenox Library had he ever visited them, but he no more dreamed of going there than the average Florentine thinks of examining the works of art in the Palazzo Pitti. Both wait for their country cousins to show them such sights.

He followed the ladies out to the dining-room, and sat down in a rather gloomy frame of mind, but the excellent dinner and the sound claret cheered him. Both he and Miss Berryan knew what to eat and drink, but Pauline was a trifle dismayed by the row of forks at her plate. She had never eaten such a dinner off such china, or drunk such wine out of such glass, and she was at first abashed, then exhilarated by the novelty. There were flowers on the table, the man-servant moved to and fro noiselessly, there was a musical tinkle of silver, and the delicate odor of truffles was very different from any odor that hung about Mrs. Terry's board. Pauline expanded in the atmosphere of luxury like a rose in the sunshine. Life was full of warmth and color. Miss Berryan's beautiful diamonds glistened in the candlelight, and while the mistress of the house never appeared so well, indeed, as she did when dispensing hospitality, to Pauline that night she seemed a creature full of grace and charm. The poor

girl felt guiltily conscious of her warm cheeks after she had drunk the unaccustomed wine, but she could not know how the flush heightened her beauty. Prosper hardly dared to look at her; for when his eyes met hers, she gave him a beseeching glance, and an imploring smile that filled him with a desire to tell her that she must not be alarmed; nobody was going to hurt her. By degrees she grew bolder; she ventured to talk to him a little, but still she did not feel so well acquainted with him as she had up in the country. He was very different, and she laid it mostly to his glossy shirt front. There was no need of either Prosper or her trying to converse, for Miss Berryan babbled incessantly during the dinner, and babbled on again when they were in the carriage driving to the theatre. Once there, Prosper could watch Pauline while the play was in progress, for she was unconscious of his gaze; she had eyes only for the men and women on the stage. When John Gilbert sat on the garden bench, trying to laugh at the entanglement he was in, but going off imperceptibly into gentle tears, she paid him a tribute that he would have prized more than noisy plaudits, for her eyes were wet.

"Poor old man!" she murmured.

"Oh, it will all come right," said Prosper, soothingly. "It is only make believe, you know."

But it was not make believe to her; it was real, and she longed to comfort the distracted old gentleman.

"And now for Delmonico's," cried Prosper, when the curtain had dropped for the last time.

There were a good many little theatre-parties in Delmonico's that night, but not one so gay as this, for Prosper found his tongue, and talked as his sister had never heard him, pointing out the celebrities present, and telling piquant anecdotes about them. Finally, there was a little stir about the door; a murmur ran over the room like a breeze over a wheat-field, turning every head in one direction, and an English actress entered, not a whit abashed by the curious eyes bent upon her, accompanied by a pair of famous Wall Street speculators. She walked with superb nonchalance to the corner where a table was reserved for her; and there she seated herself behind a bank of violets. Pauline waited for the applause.

"Somebody ought to clap," she said.

"Oh, we're out of the theatre, child," said Miss Berryan, who took a complacent satisfaction in the pleasure of the girl, but Prosper understood, and his eyes met Pauline's intelligently.

It was part and parcel of the comedy, the triumphant entrance of the beautiful actress, but it bewildered Pauline to remember that she was in the play too; she had partridge and champagne like everybody else, and there was a lovely cloak drooping over the back of her chair. The cloak belonged to Miss Berryan, but Pauline would have been inhuman had she not wished that it was hers, — that cloak with the dull blue ground and

silver threads, and sapphire-eyed griffins to clasp it at her throat. She reveled in the touch of it, and when Prosper lifted it on her shoulders he heard her sigh softly.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It is almost over," she answered, with a sorrowful glance.

"But only for this time," he said. "Do you think you can never go to the theatre again? My sister and I would be downright angry to have you imagine anything like that."

Outside was the waiting carriage, and Prosper put the ladies in and said "Home," but his sister cried hastily, —

"Oh no, no, Gilbert. Miss Valrey can't spend the night. Four twenty-six Harloe Row, east of First Avenue."

Prosper gave the order and the coachman shook his head dubiously as he started his horses for that quarter of the town.

"I am sorry to trouble you," Pauline said, "but you see I must be at the school early to-morrow morning, and I could not go in a silk dress."

"Oh, the school," said Prosper, blankly.

"Yes, I teach at Madame Kenyon's. Did n't you know that?"

"I believe I heard something about it. Sort of a grind, is n't it, teaching?"

To his mind teaching was a poor, pitiful trade, and he lumped Pauline and Madam Kenyon and college professors all together. He had a dim no-

tion that a college professor heard the same lessons and said the same things all the year round, and while he despised a man who could put his head under such a yoke, he only grieved for this young girl whom fate had condemned to so dreary an existence.

"And your father teaches too?" he added.

"Yes," Pauline answered; and then she told her father's history as the carriage rolled swiftly eastward through the dimly lighted streets. She told it simply.

"And as he could not sell his pictures, he was forced to teach," she concluded. "We were very poor then."

That last word gave Prosper some notion of how poor they must have been, since it showed that in comparison with that time, the present was easy and comfortable. So it was indeed; but to him, people who lived in an East Side boarding house and taught school were in a most piteous plight. He had known what it meant to scrape together enough money to pay a landlady for a wretched little hall bed-room; he had known what it was to wear threadbare clothes, to seek out cheap eating-houses, even to begrudge the pennies paid for a ride in a horse-car or an omnibus. There had been nothing of jovial bohemianism in his young days; he had not laughed dull care away over a pewter of beer with a gay companion. The bright side of decent poverty he had never seen, and he could not believe in peace and con-

tentment on a narrow income. In his crass ignorance he admired Pauline for the brave and cheery way that she bore up under the awful wretchedness of her fate. That she was blithe and light-hearted, that her cup would be full and running over with bliss if Hugh were made head book-keeper, that she looked happy because she was happy — these things Gilbert Prosper did not suspect, nor could he have been convinced of their truth. No, the poor girl was playing a part was what he thought when he heard her soft laugh ring out at some jocose speech of Miss Berryan's.

On the horses trotted, until the coachman forced them into a walk along Harloe Row, and as he could not see the numbers of the houses, he stopped twice at wrong places before he pulled up at Mrs. Terry's. The tall figure of Monsieur Valrey appeared at once in the doorway, sharply defined against the gas light in the hall.

"Oh, I ought not have kept him waiting so long," said Pauline, remembering how loth she had been to leave Delmonico's, and the company of ladies and gentlemen in brave attire.

But Monsieur did not rebuke her. He thanked Prosper for bringing his daughter home, and led her into the little parlor where Hugh, who had been asleep on the sofa, stood, trying to smooth his hair with his hands.

"How did you come by that pretty cloak?" he asked.

"It belongs to Miss Berryan," she answered.

"Look at the clasps, Hugh." She went close to him and raised her chin high so that he could see the sapphire-eyed griffins. "I will take it back to-morrow," she added, "but is n't it lovely?"

Then with the cloak still about her, she sat down and gave an account of the evening, her father and Hugh looking at her glowing face in enraptured silence. They hung over her, they smiled when she did, they glanced at each other indulgently, and she basked in the warmth of their adoration and chattered like a magpie until her father summoned up sufficient courage to bid her go to bed. In the upper hall, she lingered to speak a word in Hugh's ear.

"If you had only been with me!" she whispered. "I kept thinking of you — wanting you."

"Patience, sweetheart," her lover murmured. He stooped to kiss her, but in the darkness his lips touched the silver clasps of her cloak before they found her soft, up-turned cheek.

IX.

PAULINE always came away from Miss Berryan's with a budget of gay talk to dole out to her father and Hugh. Sometimes she had gone to a matinée; she had visited a picture gallery; she had driven in the Park, and she told of her pleasures with great spirit and vivacity. She was beginning to look upon the hours spent with the rich spinster as the brightest spots in her humdrum life. The lessons to the child were soon over; she might have scámped them and had no fault found with her, but she did her duty by her pupil faithfully, so that she could enjoy her recreations to the very uttermost. How sweet they were no girl bred up to luxury can imagine. To cross the threshold of Miss Berryan's house was to enter into a fair, new, wonderful world. Of Prosper, however, she saw but little, for although he took her and his sister sometimes to places of amusement, it was not often. Because he felt the charm of her presence strongly, because her smile, her voice filled him with desire, he kept away from her. He had old-fashioned ideas; he considered it dishonorable to try to steal another man's sweetheart or wife. Yet the pity of it struck him. He could give her all the good things

of life, and she had thrown in her lot with a man who could give her nothing. To be sure, Hugh Langmuir might in the course of years attain a decent fortune, but by that time Pauline's joyous youth would be past, and the keen appetite for pleasures dulled. Prosper regarded Hugh as one of the steady, plodding sort, that by dint of patience and perseverance gets on in the world, but he did not think him a man likely to accomplish wonders. He strove to look at the matter dispassionately, to say that it was of no consequence to him what became of his clerk and his sister's last *protégée*, and every day he vowed he would banish all thoughts of them both. His life was too empty for him to keep any such vow. Business schemes could not fill all his thoughts, and outside of business schemes he had few, almost no interests. The dreary monotony of his days began to irk him. It was gratifying to crush out a rival in trade, to pit his wit against other men's, to lay up dollar on dollar, but the old question came with appalling newness. What good? what good were his triumphs, his successful plans, his ever-increasing stocks and bonds? And then grew day by day, hour by hour, the sweet illusion that he could find happiness only in laying his hard-earned treasures at a girl's feet. He swore he would not be a fool; there were women enough in the world if he wanted a wife, and he never passed a shop window where jewels glittered without an impulse leaping up within him to carry a handful of them to Pauline Valrey.

The autumn passed; a few shriveled leaves clung desperately to the trees in the squares until they were swept off at last by the biting winds of November. As the holiday season drew near, the shop windows grew gay with tempting trifles, each declaring itself a most appropriate gift, and Prosper looked at them with the morose reflection that he had nobody to give gifts to except his sister, who already had everything money could buy. No snow fell, and Christmas was a drab, doleful day, which made wiseacres shake their heads and echo the old saying about a green Christmas filling the grave-yards. The lad who woke up to find skates in his stocking rejoiced, but the boy who was blessed with a new sled moaned for snow. Miss Berryan sent Pauline a pretty little watch, with a neatly turned note expressing the wish that the hands might count no unhappy hours.

It was not until the close of the last dull day of December that the flakes began to flutter down, floating about in the air, seeming loth to touch the filth of the town, yet reluctant to return to the leaden sky. They lit lightly on Monsieur Valrey's face, melting on his eyelashes and blinding him. Chilled to the bone, he hurried homeward, the snow whirling about him thicker and faster, and stealing down his neck, despite his upturned coat collar. The air was so still that sounds pierced it sharply, like a knife. Men shouted to their horses, the brutes broke into a gallop, and the streets were full of mysterious noises, that

grew more mysterious as the snow drove down thicker and muffled them. The red gleam of the groggery windows, the yellow flare of the street lamps, showed the flakes, shrunk into fine, serried lines. Boys cried the last evening editions of newspapers hoarsely; a hospital ambulance dashed over the stones, the horse on a run, the gong clanging its warning. Monsieur Valrey saw car after car pass him, laden and overflowing with a black mass of men and women. He could only bow his head to the stinging storm and quicken his stride, running into people, who like himself were seeking shelter, in blind, mad haste. Once, as he crossed a street, a rattling cart bore down on him, and he stepped back only to be nearly trampled on by a pair of horses that it seemed to him had risen up out of the bowels of the earth. Trembling, he stood for a minute, too bewildered to go on or back, and a policeman sauntering past paused to look into his face, lit up by the hissing street lamp. Vague fears took possession of him, and he darted forward wildly, slipping on the treacherous stones, avoiding the frenzied horses, pushing past the hurrying crowds, faster and faster, goaded on by the cruel snow and the awful, hushed tumult. Harloe Row was silent and deserted, but he did not pause until he had reached his haven. He was shivering more with excitement than with cold, for he had run a race against the oncoming night, and the imps of darkness. No sooner had he crossed the threshold of Mrs. Terry's house

than he sank down in the nearest chair, hovering for a long minute on the brink of unconsciousness. There was no one at hand to help him. It was the half hour before dinner, when the mistress of the house was in the kitchen and Pauline was changing her school dress for one of the bright colored gowns that her father had bought for her, — that he loved to see her wearing. As the old man sat there, he knew that his race home in the darkness and the storm had done its work for him; with consciousness came the knowledge of his fatigue and feebleness. He rose at last, and trembling from head to foot, drew off his overcoat, just as Hugh opened the house door, and knocked the snow from his hat.

"Ah, Papa Valrey," he cried, "it is coming down now with a vengeance, — the snow. By to-morrow morning, the streets will be blocked from Harlem to the Battery. Dear me, how good it is to get home on a night like this!"

"Yes," said Papa Valrey. Then he hesitated. "Hugh," he added, "I am an old man, an old man. Give me your arm, my son, as far as the parlor. I won't go up-stairs before dinner."

"Don't you feel well, sir?" said Hugh, as Papa Valrey put his hand through the strong young arm.

"I was caught in the storm," he answered. "The snow bewildered me a little. There," and he dropped down in an arm-chair and closed his eyes.

Hugh knelt and took off his wet boots and socks; then threw Mrs. Terry's gorgeous knitted afghan over the old man's bare feet, and hastened up-stairs. Pauline gave him dry socks and slippers, and when Hugh put them on, Valrey smiled with infinite tenderness.

"Thou art a good son," he said in French; and Hugh knew how much the gentle "thou" meant.

"Not ill, papa?" said Pauline.

"Oh no, no. To-morrow I shall be quite well again."

He looked at her wistfully; she was so sweet and fresh in her dark red dress, with the bit of lace at her neck. He stretched out his hand to her. She came close to his chair, and stood beside him, smoothing his hand, until he drew her nearer, and with a yearning smile clasped her in his arms, laying his wrinkled face against her soft cheek. Hugh turned away to the window; that caress was sacred. The old man held his daughter thus for a minute; then kissed her once gently on her lips. So he bade her farewell, for he felt that his time with her was almost at an end.

He did not leave his bed the next day; it was the holiday season, he said, and he could rest. He was too tired to battle against illness; he was too tired to protest when Pauline told him he must see a doctor. A bright-eyed old physician, who had known Valrey for years, came and sat by his bedside, chatting cheerfully for a long time. He left some medicine, and Pauline put her pretty

little watch to its first use in counting the hours when she should give her father a few drops of a liquid that she hoped and prayed would renew his failing strength. He took it like a child; he was patient and docile. All he asked was that she should stay by him, and while he did not say much to her, he was contented only when she was within reach of his hand. The doctor, when confronted by her sad, eager face, spoke encouragingly, but she heard the truth beneath his hopeful words. To Hugh, the doctor said, seeing everything, understanding everything, —

"You had better sleep on the lounge in Monsieur Valrey's room. He might want something in the night, though I don't think it likely that he will ever want much."

Hugh looked at him quickly, and the doctor touched his left side with his finger.

"Heart," he said curtly; then Hugh understood, and all the household knew that the shadow of death was drawing nearer and nearer. The end came at evening, not quite a week after that walk home in the storm and darkness. Hugh entered the sick-room where Pauline sat by her father, holding his hand, and he knelt beside her chair, covering her other hand with his as it lay in her lap. The snow was falling again and bits of ice tinkled against the window. So they watched life sink down in the socket and flicker out, not knowing how fast death was coming on. The old man's face was towards them. He opened his eyes,

smiled, murmured a name, then drew the last sigh of his life. They sat motionless until Pauline felt the change in her father's hand, and she drew hers away, looking to Hugh, in fear and wonder. He put his arms about her, pressed her head against his breast.

"Dearest, you have only me."

Below in the dining-room the others sat, waiting, they hardly knew why, and when the servant reached out to take the bell, her mistress shook her head. They waited a long time before they heard Hugh coming down the stairs, and his soft, slow footsteps made Mrs. Terry turn pale, but when she saw his face, she would have hurried from the room, had he not caught her by the arm.

"She is better alone," he said.

"Dead?" she whispered.

"Yes, without a struggle."

"And she is there?"

He bowed; he could not speak.

The servant, a gaunt, hard-handed Irishwoman, threw her apron over her face and burst out crying. Mr. Kane walked to the window, where he stood looking blankly into the darkness, until at last he turned and went up-stairs slowly to his wife.

But Pauline gave way to no outburst of grief. If she wept, only Hugh saw her tears. The next day brought the clergyman, and Madam Kenyon,

and Miss Berryan, and one or two other acquaintances, and these Pauline was forced to meet. Many of Monsieur Valrey's pupils came to the funeral, young and old, who thus tried to show their regard for one to whom esteem and contumely were now alike. When Pauline went out to the carriage on Hugh's arm, Madam Kenyon put up her eye-glass. Afterward, she asked who the tall young man was, and the reply filled the school-teacher with a sense of wrong.

"Engaged to him," she repeated. She thought, but she did not say, that she ought to have been told this.

"Yes, they have been engaged most a year," said Mrs. Terry. "He is a clergyman's son, and been to college, — a perfick gentleman, but he is poor; he can't marry her yet. You 'll keep Miss Valrey right on, won't you?"

"As long as she wishes to teach," answered Madam Kenyon, coldly.

It was all over. Everything went on as before, save that one old man no longer walked to and from Harloe Row, and sundry people were compelled to look up a new painting-teacher. Pauline woke in the night to weep, and came down-stairs in the morning so pale and heavy-eyed that Hugh's heart ached for her. She had bought the black dress that even the poorest woman will have when one near and dear is gone, never to return. The pitiful crape that a poverty-stricken widow puts on her bonnet to show her

grief for perhaps a worthless husband is more pathetic than the stately trappings of woe in which a rich woman shrouds herself. The sight of Pauline in that sombre gown filled Hugh with a sense of utter helplessness. He could neither comfort her nor take her away from the scene of her sorrows. Again and again he found her in her father's studio, sitting in his chair, looking at the pictures he had painted, and then he felt that even he could not quite enter into her grief; it flashed upon him how lonely each life must be at the best.

X.

"WHAT is she going to do?" Prosper asked.

"Ah, poor thing, she is so brave, and she looks so white in her black dress — mourning does not become her, for she needs bright colors; but she goes to the school just the same, and she has taken a good many of her father's drawing-pupils, though some think they must have a man to teach 'em, but her salary has been raised, and I guess she has enough to live on."

"Old man leave her anything?"

"Two thousand dollars — against a rainy day, you know, and I am dying to help her, but I don't dare mention it, for she is proud and sensitive, and you have to be very delicate with a girl like her, Gilbert; still, she ought to know that she has a friend in me, poor thing, and I am so fond of her that I 'd bring her here to live, if I could."

"Why not make her Jennie's governess?" said Prosper; and at this Jennie pricked up her ears.

It was Sunday afternoon. They sat in Miss Berryan's cheerful library, the wood-fire rustling at their feet. Jennie was reading a book which she considered proper on that day, and while she bent her head over the pages, apparently absorbed

in the decorous story, she heard every word of her elders' conversation. Monsieur Valrey had been in his grave almost a week; Pauline was back at the school once more, doing her duty with a sad face that awed her pupils. Madam Kenyon said nothing about it, but she felt much aggrieved that she had not been told of her teacher's engagement. She thoroughly disapproved of an engaged teacher; a love affair was a distraction, and while heretofore she could find no fault with Pauline, she was on the lookout for absent-minded blunders now, and what so sharp-eyed a woman as she is bent on finding, she generally does find.

"And," Prosper added, after a little pause, "if she were Jennie's governess, you could have her here to live. I don't know but what it would be a good thing for you, too, Jane. It is n't just right for you to be living here with only a pack of servants and a child for company."

"I am thirty-six years old, and I can take care of myself pretty well," said Miss Berryan, "but I 'd like to have Miss Valrey here. Perhaps we can manage it next winter, for I don't suppose she could leave Madam Kenyon's right in the middle of the term, and" —

"She is over there in Harloe Row?" asked Prosper, impatiently.

"Oh yes, she is quite at home there, and the woman who keeps the house is an excellent, motherly sort of person, who is much attached to her, and the last time I was there, she, that is, Miss

Valrey, took me up to see her father's paintings, and they are perfectly exquisite, Gilbert; and, poor thing, she does n't know what to do with 'em, for she does n't like to burn 'em, and she can't afford to store 'em; and I thought of bringing a few here, a dozen, — they are all small, — and asking some people to see 'em, for, though I am not a connoisseur, I do know a painting from a daub, and I am sure Professor Delmar would admire the pictures. Don't you think it would be a good plan? She gave me one, and I have it in my room up-stairs."

"Why don't you buy them all and have done with it?" cried Prosper.

"Because the proposal to do so would offend her," answered Miss Berryan, who had the tact that springs from genuine sympathy.

Prosper gave a groan of disgust.

"Manage it your own way," he said, "but if you really want to be of service to the child, — she is nothing but a child, — you had better bring her here to live and see that she has enough to eat."

"Do you think she is ever hungry, Cousin Gilbert?" asked Jennie, suddenly, but he gave no heed to her question, spoken in a timid, entreating tone. He leaned back in his chair, frowning heavily, and one end of his mustache he chewed fiercely. This was his habit when he was disturbed in mind, and he had of late bitten off his mustache so that it looked as if it had been

singed. Jennie watched his dark face covertly, and the contortions of his mouth as he caught the ends of the mustache between his teeth made his countenance anything but pleasant to look upon. It seemed to fascinate her, however. Finally she glanced at Miss Berryan, who was also lost in profound thought; then she went back to her book, and the room was very still.

"Jennie, take your book up-stairs for a little while," said Miss Berryan, brusquely. "Nurse is there, and I guess you 'll find a fire in my room, and you can go there and sit if you want to."

"I would rather stay here," said Jennie, beseechingly; "I don't see Cousin Gilbert often."

He caught the child in his arms and pressed her to his breast so roughly that she gave a little cry.

"Do you love the old man?" he said, looking down at her face, framed in a mass of golden hair on his shoulder.

"Dearly," she answered, twining her arms around his neck.

He held her close for a minute; then ran up-stairs with her and left her to the care of the respectable woman who was nurse to the child and maid to Miss Berryan.

"She is a little fraud," he said, when he returned to his sister. "She is a little soft, catty thing, but I suppose one of these days a man will sell his soul for her. Now, what were you going to say, Jane?"

"It was about Miss Valrey. She took me into her confidence, and she is engaged to be married to a young man who is in your office, which certainly is a most extraordinary coincidence, and I am amazed that she did n't tell me before, but I don't like her any the less for her reticence, — women are always too much given to talk, I think. He lives there in the boarding-house, and he is a clergyman's son, very poor, of course, but I have been thinking that it would be the best thing for her if she could be married soon, and you might help him to get a place where he could earn more, or you might raise his salary a little. She says that he won't marry her until he gets twelve hundred dollars a year, though she thinks they could live on less, the dear, innocent little thing; much she knows about the realities of life and the rent of a flat, and I am sure flats cost quite as much as houses nowadays, the nasty things, where you can hear people talking overhead and playing the piano, and the smells are awful, not to speak of the danger of fire. But it would be nice to have her married, and I would give her the wedding."

She paused and glanced at Gilbert. He sat motionless, staring at the fire.

"We could make a pretty wedding here," she continued, "have a bell hung between the drawing-room and the library, and everything lovely, lots of flowers, you know, and she would make such a sweet bride, Gilbert, and you could give her away."

He rose and walked to the window with a short laugh.

"I 'd look well giving her away," he said, coming back to his chair again. "I am just the man to be mixed up in such tomfool nonsense."

Then he laughed and stretched out his feet to the fire.

"It is only a boy and girl affair," he continued. "Langmuir, I suppose that is the sweetheart, is a decent, hard-working young man, and in time he may make something of himself, but you can't expect much of a boy like that. She will either have to wait years for him, or else live with him in a garret. Twelve hundred dollars a year! That means two rooms and a demnition grind. You know it as well as I do, Jane, and instead of talking sentimental stuff about wedding-bells and such rubbish, you had better put the girl in a way of getting a comfortable living. I can raise Langmuir's salary, but I don't see that it is incumbent upon me to give him three or four thousand dollars a year, — and a man and his wife can't live on much less, — merely to carry out a romantic plan for your latest *protégée*."

"Then what would you suggest?" she asked.

"Suggest nothing. You 'll be sick and tired of her inside of six months."

"Oh, Gilbert, how can you say such a cruel thing?" and the tears gathered in Miss Berryan's eyes. "You know how fond I am of her, and she is the sweetest" —

"Don't cry, for Heaven's sake," he exclaimed. "If you think she 's the sweetest creature that ever drew breath, get her out of that nauseous house in the East River, and away from that moon-struck calf who wants her to fry potatoes for him and darn his stockings through all time and eternity. If you love her, prove it. Don't whine and wring your hands and call her a poor darling. Maudlin words and tears won't put clothes on her back or food in her mouth, and she may need both."

He had risen and was striding about among the chairs and tables, his hands in his trousers pockets, his eyebrows brought together in a heavy scowl. The light of the brief winter day was fading out of the sky, and the man-servant entered the library, carrying a beautiful lamp in either hand, and the glow struggled through shades tinted the merest suggestion of rose color. He drew the curtains; he put a log on the fire, and then vanished. Everything was bright, warm, and luxurious, and Prosper writhed to think of Pauline in some bare little room, mourning for her father, lonely, sad, poor.

He went to his hotel soon after dinner, and he found his head book-keeper, Mr. Hilyer, waiting for him. The two men went up-stairs to Prosper's sitting-room, which was large enough and comfortable enough, but it had a cheerless look which he was conscious of, but did not know how to banish.

"Well, Hilyer, what brings you here to night? Something or other, I know."

"Well, yes, I thought you might like to see this;" and Mr. Hilyer held out a long letter, at the sight of which Prosper pulled a wry face.

"You don't suppose I am going to wade through all that, do you? Give me the gist of it."

He suspected what was coming, and threw a piece of coal on the fire impatiently.

"Well, my son-in-law, who lives out in Terre Haute, has got a concern there — makes tools, and he has been wanting me to go in with him for a long time" —

"Oh yes, yes, I know," said Prosper, who had heard all about the son-in-law in Terre Haute and the concern there; "and I suppose you want two thousand dollars a year. Now, see here, Hilyer, your work is worth twelve hundred dollars to us, and we could get plenty of men as good as you for that, but we give you fifteen hundred, and if you are not satisfied, why, you had better go. Langmuir can take the books and be devilish glad to have twelve hundred a year, and he won't kick all the time, either."

"Well, that is what I wanted to know," said Hilyer, calmly.

Prosper turned on him. "What was it you wanted to know?"

"Why, if you would be willing to trust Langmuir. It is a position of trust, Mr. Prosper, that's what it is, and though it ain't worth much to the

man who holds it, it is worth a good deal to you to have an honest man in the place."

"Oh, I would trust Langmuir with any amount," Prosper exclaimed. He did not suppose for a moment that Hilyer had the least intention of leaving; the book-keeper had talked in this strain many times before, but now he said: —

"Well, then, I can go out to Terre Haute as soon as I want to. I have got to go any way. My son-in-law is sick, and things have been getting crooked, and I have got a little money in the concern, so though I'd hate to leave you in the lurch, if Langmuir can step into my shoes, I'll be off with an easy conscience."

He crammed his son-in-law's letter into his pocket and stood up with the air of a man who has taken a resolve. Then it was for Prosper to eat a slice of humble pie. He tried to treat it all as a joke; he finally fumed and even swore a little, but Hilyer was firm; he turned a deaf ear to the prospect of two thousand a year, and would only promise to stay long enough to go over the books with Langmuir and start him fairly.

"But," cried Prosper, "I have no right to turn the office upside down. I am only one of the company. There is the treasurer and the secretary to be considered. I am only one of the three."

Mr. Hilyer did not quite thrust his tongue in his cheek, but he knew perfectly well that Mr. Gilbert Prosper was, to all intents and purposes, the Essex Manufacturing Company, and that the

two other members of the corporation were practically dummies; therefore, his grave countenance wore a somewhat comical look for a moment.

"I am sorry to appear disobliging," he said, "but a man's duty is to himself and his family first."

"Ough!" Prosper exclaimed at this sentiment. "Well, go to Terre Haute, go to — go to where you like, but if you don't wish yourself back in the office inside of two months, then I shall be much mistaken. If you go, you go for good; understand that."

"Yes, I understand," said Hilyer, holding out his hand, which Prosper took, smiling and frowning at once, and saying, —

"Well, it is a bad breeze that blows nobody good. Langmuir will be as pleased as Punch."

"And I believe he wants to get married," said Hilyer, demurely. "He is a nice fellow and keeps as neat a set of books as you'd care to see. I hope he may get on in the world."

"I hope so," the other echoed; but after the book-keeper had gone, Prosper gnawed his mustache more fiercely than ever.

"Likely he'll marry that girl day after to-morrow," he said to himself. "Poor little thing! and she'll have to slave and worry to make ends meet. Then there'll be a baby" —

Here Prosper cut short his soliloquy and went below to the great corridors, where he talked with sundry business acquaintances until midnight. He

was a temperate man; he drank a glass of wine or ale when he wanted it; he spurred his lagging appetite sometimes with a piquant cock-tail; but this evening he went into the bar-room so often as to rather surprise the frequenters of the hotel, who knew his habits. What he drank had slight effect on him; it was with a heavy heart and a burning brain that he laid his head on his pillow, and tormenting thoughts drove sleep from him that night.

XI.

THERE were rejoicings in Harloe Row when Hugh announced that he had stepped into a better place, and a salary of a hundred dollars a month. Mr. Kane shook hands with him solemnly.

"I 'm glad of your luck, Hugh, but it is no more than you deserve," he said, and then he sighed a little. "Don't let up," he added.

"Oh, I won't," said Hugh. "I have only just begun."

"How pleased old M'seer would have been," said Mrs. Terry. "He did n't have any luck at all, and he was the best man I ever knew, and the hardest working."

Pauline wished her father were with her to be glad in her gladness, but Hugh's rise distracted her from sorrowful memories not a little, and she began to look to the future again. There were rejoicings, too, up in the country parsonage; Hugh's father and mother spread abroad the news of their son's advancement, and more than one rustic youth turned a longing eye towards New York. Only Gilbert Prosper did not view the change with unadulterated delight. He had no desire to keep Hugh down, but neither was he eager to push him up, and he had given him

Hilyer's position because it was Hugh's in the natural order of things, and not at all because he wished to encourage an ardent young man. Nevertheless, it was this last view of the matter that Miss Berryan took, and she maddened her brother by telling him how good and generous he was to give poor Mr. Langmuir a better paid post. In vain Prosper protested, in vain he declared that goodness and generosity had nothing to do with it, she praised him up to the skies and prattled about Pauline's wedding until he had a fierce idea of luring Hilyer from the seductions of his son-in-law by the offer of a share in the corporation.

But if Miss Berryan could not revel in romantic talk with her brother, she could with Pauline, whom she had by this time put on a pedestal, and was worshiping with spinster sentimentality. She sent the girl flowers, she kept her to luncheon, kissed her when she came, kissed her again when she went, and petted her and fondled her in a fashion that Pauline found rather embarrassing, even while she thought that it was thus Miss Berryan's sympathy in affliction showed itself. It was all very kind and loving, but it was just a trifle wearing, too. She ventured to hint at this to Hugh, who reproved her tenderly, although in his heart of hearts he was glad that the glamour of wealth had dazzled her not at all, and that she could find a rich woman something of a bore. He was not jealous, but love is selfish. He did not want Miss Berryan to get too firm a hold on Pauline's affection.

"You are ungrateful," said Hugh. "Miss Berryan proves her affection by squeezing your hand and feeding you on the fat o' the land" —

"Oh, a rhyme," cried Pauline, so lightly that Hugh was enchanted. It seemed to him a long time since he had heard her laugh out, since she had been gay-hearted enough to make a little fun of him once in a while.

"Well, it was a rhyme, but what of that? She does feed you on the fat o' the land, and I expected you to begin to put on great airs and scorn Mrs. Terry's corned beef and cabbage. Instead of being grateful, though, for the goods your goddess provides, you wish the goddess would not talk so eternally."

She looked down at the ring he had given her on Christmas Day, and turned it around thoughtfully.

"Yes, Miss Berryan is very kind. She wants me to bring you to call."

"I have no coat good enough," he returned, "and I don't mean to buy one either just now. All I can save must go toward furnishing the little flat we are going to take in the spring."

"But my money is enough for that," she said.

"Oh no, no. Your money is to be kept for a rainy day."

Pauline was silent for a time. They were in Mrs. Terry's parlor, which they had mostly to themselves in the evenings now, for no boarder had come to fill Monsieur Valrey's place, although

Mrs. Terry was investigating the character of a man and his wife who wanted the three rooms on the third floor. The couple had a child, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, and landladies are reluctant to receive noisy urchins. Then, too, Mrs. Terry dreaded to speak to Pauline about the necessity of removing the pictures from the studio. Removed they must be, but where were they to be put, unless they were hung up all over the house? It was about these that Pauline spoke to Hugh presently.

"Miss Berryan thinks that papa's pictures could be sold, if they were exhibited," she said, "and she wants me to bring the best ones to her house. Then she will invite her friends to see them. What do you think, Hugh?"

To Hugh the plan seemed a good one. He wished to keep some pictures for that little flat, but if twenty or thirty were sold, there would be plenty left. The walls of the studio were covered with them; so were the walls of Pauline's bedroom, and others were stacked up in corners, and studies and sketches by the score were hidden away in portfolios. Yet Miss Berryan's plan smacked a little of charity, which half offended both Pauline and Hugh, but after a long discussion, six of the pictures were chosen and sent to Miss Berryan's house. When Pauline went thither to give her lessons, she found the paintings placed in the best light the drawing-room afforded, and the sight of them in that strange place filled

her with emotion. Tears started to her eyes, but she forced them back resolutely, and went up to the nursery to give Jennie the customary instruction in French and drawing. The child was a pleasant pupil, quick to learn, and industrious, which made the task of teaching her light and agreeable. Miss Berryan always sat by, curbing her tongue for the nonce, and meanwhile accomplishing wonders in the direction of the newest sort of fancy work, that in the course of time must find its way to the limbo of Berlin wool cats and dogs. No sooner was the hour over than she burst forth. A girl forced to practice scales for just so long did not watch the hands of the clock more anxiously than did Miss Berryan. She breathed freer when the stent was done for that day.

"I have asked my friends to come on Tuesday evening," she said, "and I am really glad that I have an excuse for paying off old scores in this way, and it is quite original to give an art evening with a supper, salads and things, but I am afraid Gilbert won't come, though he half promised to, but he dropped in to see the pictures, which he says he is no judge of, and nobody I know is a judge, except Professor Delmar. Of course everybody thinks they understand painting perfectly, and it is ridiculous to hear them talk about light and shade, just as they talk about music, without being much more than able to tell the difference between Arthur Sullivan and Chopin."

Miss Berryan was herself no contemptible musician, and she played the piano better than many who made far greater pretensions than she. It was because she appreciated good music that she regarded her own playing so humbly, and consequently her friends hardly knew of her accomplishment. They remembered that she had studied in Germany awhile, but in the lingo of their kind, they concluded that she had not kept up her practicing. They laughed among themselves over her invitation to an art evening. "One of Jane's notions; she has some humbug of an artist in tow now," was the comment. Nevertheless, they all came and they all studied poor Monsieur Valrey's pictures and ate rich Miss Berryan's salads. Professor Delmar understood the work exhibited, the quality of which not only surprised him, but excited his profound respect, and his verdict set the current of opinion. He did something more than talk. He wrote a little notice of Monsieur Valrey's pictures for a newspaper, and they were exhibited in a Union Square art store, where they attracted considerable attention and were sold at fairly good prices. Pauline was richer by a few hundred dollars, which, added to what her father had left her, made her feel like a millionaire. She and Hugh were happy and hopeful in those days, and peace reigned in the little house in Harloe Row until the new boarders came, a certain Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, and Master Hermann Fisher. They were of German origin, and had only lately

dropped the *c* out of their name. Mr. Fisher kept a small shoe shop around the corner in First Avenue. It was with neither pride nor pleasure that Mrs. Terry could regard them, but as she said, "Beggars cannot be choosers," and the Fishers were respectable and honest. He was a snarling, fault-finding, petty tyrant; she a poor, weak creature, old before her time, who bowed down to her husband and spoiled her son. This son was supposed to be going to school, but he had the ear-ache and the head-ache and the stomach-ache, and stayed home a good deal. Then Mr. Fisher would scold his wife for indulging the boy's whims, and she, roused as the meekest mother is in defense of her young, declared that poor Hermann was ill. It ended always with high words on the husband's side, tears on the wife's, and through the thin walls the sound of wrangling was carried to Pauline and Hugh.

At the table there were no more friendly chats, no more jests and laughter. Mrs. Fisher watched the chicken livers with an eagle eye, and Mrs. Terry dared not bestow them invariably on Pauline. Hermann whined if the gravy gave out; his father frowned if the meat was not cooked to suit, and he could turn a slice of beef over on his plate with such a nasty smile that Mrs. Terry was sometimes filled with fierce desire to throw beef, potatoes, and bread at the unpleasant, sneering dealer in ladies' and gents' fashionable boots and shoes.

One evening Hugh came home and found Master Fisher sneaking out of his bed-room.

"What are you doing there, sir?" said Hugh, sharply; "that's my room."

"Ma!" cried the boy, in terror.

Mrs. Fisher hastened forth only to see her darling get a good cuffing. She abused Hugh, called him names, and filled the house with her angry words. Mr. Fisher demanded an apology, to which Hugh curtly said that anybody he found prying into his room would be sure to get hurt. The result was great haughtiness on the part of the Fishers, and a general locking of doors on the part of the other members of the household. Mrs. Terry's day of triumph was over. She was mistress of just a vulgar, ordinary boarding-house, full of strife and discord. She could not afford to turn the Fishers out; she had rent to pay and coal to buy, and she could only hope that a less obnoxious couple might demand her hospitality in the spring.

Reckless of expense, she had the dining-room lighted in the evening, and there she sat with Hugh and Pauline, leaving the Fishers in possession of the parlor. Their friends often came to call, and they held wordy arguments in the German language which it was Pauline's birthright to hate. There was a little Franco-Prussian war in that house, and the Kaiser element seemed to prevail over the superior forces of the French. No wonder that Pauline spent more and more

time in Miss Berryan's beautiful house, and it grew to be a haven of refuge to the girl, every fibre of whose nature revolted against clamor and confusion. She would not go to the theatre again; she clung to her black dress, but she was not averse to dining and passing the night at Miss Berryan's. Hugh missed her sadly on those evenings, although when the coarse laughter and talk of the Fishers rang out, he tried to be glad that she was where elegance reigned. He would take her away to a home of her own soon, and this thought alone soothed and consoled him during her absence. He scanned the columns of advertisements of flats, finally finding one that seemed within his means, and on a Friday evening he said to Pauline, —

"I will get off early to-morrow afternoon, and we will go to see a flat in West Ninety-Second Street. I looked at it to-day, but I did not have time to peer into all the nooks and crannies."

"But, Hugh," she returned, "it is only February, and we cannot be married before July."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot desert Madame Kenyon in the middle of winter."

"Yes, you can, and there is no reason why we should wait. I would not be in such a hurry perhaps if we were comfortable here, but since these vile Fishers have descended upon us, there is neither comfort nor decency in the house. That slobbering woman makes me absolutely sick, and surely, my darling, to save me from crime you would do anything, would n't you?"

He had his arm around her waist, and as she looked up in his face, she saw love and mischief twinkling in his eyes.

"You would, would n't you?" he repeated, drawing her a little closer. "You would save me from imprisonment, death perhaps? You would not like to see me carried off in the Black Maria, twenty policemen protecting me from an irate mother? But you will see me, unless you marry me and take me away very soon. I will kill that Fisher boy; my fingers itch to do it. I will throw him down-stairs and break his neck and spoil the new stair carpet, and then Mrs. Terry will help Mrs. Fisher string me up to a lamp-post. Sweetheart, it is your duty to protect me, and so we will snap our fingers at Madam Kenyon, be married" — He drew her still closer, putting his other arm around her shoulder so that he could press her to his breast — "Ah, my darling," he murmured, "my own, I want my wife."

She clung to him. "Yes, yes, Hugh," she said, "and I want to go with you. Sometimes I am sorry I ever knew any one but you, that I ever had a glimpse into any other sort of life than that which ours will be."

He understood. "By God, you shall have all you want some day," he cried. "I swear to you, Pauline, that I will not condemn you to poverty. And when fortune does come, as it shall, it will be the sweeter because we have known poverty together. And we are not too poor to begin. We

shall have bread, and to spare. We can live comfortably on what I earn now, and shall we quarrel with fate because we have no splendor?"

So they talked, coming down gradually from dreams to reality. But Pauline could not go to look at the flat the next day; she had promised to spend the afternoon with Miss Berryan, and Hugh did not urge her to break the engagement.

XII.

PROSPER left the office at noon and rode up town in an elevated car, alighting at Forty-Second Street. He looked at his watch. It still lacked a quarter of an hour to one, and at one his sister lunched. That Pauline was with her he knew, but although he walked from Sixth Avenue across to Fifth, and then turned down, he could not quite make up his mind to join the ladies at the luncheon-table. He pictured them sitting there, his sister talking, while Pauline sat by listening and smiling, Jennie demurely watching them both. When he came opposite the house, he looked at the rows of curtained windows, but no face met his, no beckoning finger encouraged him to enter. Seeing him hesitate, a driver of an omnibus raised his whip inquiringly, and Prosper got into the lumbering vehicle and allowed himself to be taken down to Madison Square. He went into Delmonico's, and, blind to the flourishing arm of the nearest waiter, crossed the room and seated himself at the table which Pauline had once honored. The memory of her wistful smile haunted him. The waiter spread the *menu* before him, filled the tumbler

with water, then paused, expectant and obsequious.

"Oh, bring me anything," said Prosper, fretfully. "I don't care. What are you good for if you can't tell what a gentleman wants from the set of his collar? Come, François or Thomas or whatever your name is, get me anything you please."

The Swiss smiled, pocketed the half dollar, and went off with a sly wink to one of his fellows. He had met with gentlemen of this calibre before, and he knew he was safe to carry him a thick, rare steak, set in mushrooms. Prosper groaned and ate it. He was tired of the eternal steak and mushrooms; he was tired of chicken livers on a spit; he was tired of all the bedeviled kickshaws of restaurants. He was in the mood when a man talks of pork and beans and codfish balls, and eulogizes his mother's bread and pancakes. After he had eaten the luncheon he knew not what to do or whither to go. He belonged to no club, and he scorned the man who did. He lighted a cigar and strolled up Broadway, meeting all the New Jersey and Hudson River girls on their way to the theatre, for it was a fine Saturday afternoon, such as always draws the suburban folks to town. He followed a bevy of chattering, satchel-carrying damsels into a theatre, but once in his seat, he was horrified to find himself almost the only man of the audience. He remembered sundry jocose remarks that he had once read in a

paper about the man who goes to a matinée, and at the end of the first act he went out. An acquaintance greeted him on the walk.

"Well, Prosper, what are you doing up-town at this hour?"

"Waiting for somebody to come along," he answered.

Then followed the customary invitation, and they two strolled into the Hoffman House bar to drink what neither of them wanted particularly. The painted nymphs smiled and held up wreaths; a countryman stared at them agape. This countryman belonged to the old-fashioned type which is not often seen in these days; for ready-made clothing has banished the rural tailor, and the man from a village, although he still has the rustic touch in his garb, presents no more a striking contrast to his city brother. The countryman who stared at the pictures of the rosy goddesses was clad in black broadcloth, and his low-cut vest displayed a liberal expanse of rumpled shirt-front. Around his limp, old-fashioned collar was a yard or two of black bombazine; on his head was a rusty silk hat; over his arm hung an overcoat, and in his hand was that relic of by-gone days, a carpet-bag. His weather-beaten face wore a shrewd, kindly expression; he screwed up his mouth as he looked about him, and his little blue eyes took in everything and everybody. To a foreigner, he would doubtless have presented a type of the ideal American, for he had even the long chin beard which

the Honorable Mr. Ephraim P. Slingsby of the English novel is never without.

The old countryman was regarded by the idlers with serious interest, and after he had taken a drink, as though in duty bound to pay in some form for the entertainment the gilded resort had afforded him, he went out and pursued his way up-town. Prosper followed him for a distance, then hailed an omnibus, and once more arrived at his sister's house. He looked at it, and finally he entered; the threshold was a Rubicon to him.

"Why, Gilbert, where do you come from?" Miss Berryan asked.

"I had business up-town to-day, and I thought I had better drop in to say that I can't come to dinner to-morrow. How do you do, Miss Valrey?"

"I am very glad to see you," she said. "I want to tell you how grateful I am to you for giving Mr. Langmuir such a good position."

"Oh, don't say a word about that. He gets the place because he has earned it. There is not much sentiment in business. Langmuir is bound to succeed, that is all. Hello, Jennie."

Jennie bounded into his arms and he swung her up to kiss her.

"What nice rosy cheeks you have, Cousin Gilbert," she said, touching his face where it showed above his beard. The color deepened a little under the child's admiring eyes.

"You are a flatterer," he said.

They sat down in the library, the ladies to go

on with their work. Pauline's was not of the useless sort; she had come prepared to spend the day, and she was putting pockets on a serviceable apron, such as she wore when giving a drawing lesson. She explained to Prosper.

"You see how big it is," she said, holding it up to him, "and it saves my dress from the charcoal, and in the pocket I can keep my bit of bread."

He looked mystified. "Charcoal and bread," he repeated, blankly.

And then she told him what uses they were put to, and she sent Jennie off to bring in her last drawing, which seemed little short of marvelous to Prosper.

"There is no reason why a child should not learn to draw as well as to write," said Pauline, primly repeating her father's theory. "One need not be a great artist to be able to draw any more than one needs to be a great author to be able to write a letter."

Prosper shook his head. "That sounds plausible, but I don't believe it would work in my case. Now, see here." He took a letter out of his pocket and traced a few lines with his pencil. "That is a horse," he added, showing it to her.

This succeeded perfectly; she laughed, and was no longer the school teacher, but the winsome girl.

"I used to play a game," said Miss Berryan, "and first one would draw a part of something, say a cat, and fold the paper so only a little bit showed of the drawing, and the next person added

anything to it and folded the paper again, and so it went round, and when you looked at the whole it was perfectly ridiculous."

This explanation she felt was not lucid, and she illustrated it. The paper was brought. Pauline traced an outline of Prosper's profile, not letting him see aught but the ends of the neck, to which he added an attempt at a dog. Miss Berryan hung a bird on the dog's tail, all unconsciously, and Jennie ended with a labored representation of a tree. The result sent them into shrieks of laughter.

"You did that," said Prosper, indicating the profile and looking at Pauline.

"And it is you, cousin," said Jennie.

"I suppose it is; but my nose is n't so classic as that. You are a flatterer, too, Miss Valrey."

He was gratified because she had portrayed him and done a kindness to his features. Jennie begged for another effort at a joint drawing, and to please her the paper was sent round again. Then the nurse carried her off for a walk, a lady called on Miss Berryan, and Pauline and Prosper were left alone in the library. The big apron was folded up in a snug roll, and she began to fashion a flat, silk scarf for Hugh. She kept him supplied with neckties, which she made deftly.

"When everything else fails," she said, "I can always turn a hand to gentlemen's scarfs. I notice advertisements crying for women to do such work."

"A wretched, starving trade," said Prosper, "but one you will never need to ply, I am sure."

"Oh no. I do not expect to ply it. Hugh will take care of me. Thanks to you, we expect to be married in the spring — perhaps sooner. He has already been looking for a flat."

"Don't get a flat with dark rooms," Prosper said. "You must have a sunny exposure."

He groaned within him. Well he knew that a sunny exposure meant money. He saw her shut in rooms that gave on dingy courts where light penetrated dimly. The idea was abhorrent to him.

"What do you want to be married for?" he said, bluntly. "I don't understand it."

"No," she returned, "I don't suppose you do. If you did you would not ask such a question."

She looked up in his face to smile, then went back to her scarf-working, the smile still lingering about her mouth. She found his brusque manner rather agreeable, and his ignorance amusing. The idea of asking a girl why she wanted to be married! She laughed softly, but Prosper did not even smile. He pitied her; she did not realize all that marriage meant; she saw nothing beyond a pretty wedding and a honeymoon, and he saw dull, domestic cares, weary efforts to eke out a pinched income, and to keep children fed and clad. The folly of it might have aroused his contempt had he not been filled with pity for this girl who was gliding into a life of trial and responsibility with a smile on her lips.

"Well," he said, finally, "granting that I do not understand it, I am just a little surprised to hear that you are to be married so soon. I am afraid Langmuir overrates his salary. He is country bred, and perhaps he forgets that in a city air and light cost money."

"Ah," she returned, "but you forget that I have been bred up to work, and that what seems to you so little money seems to me a good deal. It will be no hardship for Hugh and me to go without many things which you have been used to all your life."

"Miss Valrey," he said, "from the time I was eighteen years old to twenty-five or six, I had to work hard to keep a coat on my back. More than that, I tried to go into business, failed, and then was forced to struggle along under a burden of debt. If you think I don't know what it is to be poor, you are mistaken. I know what it is to be poor, friendless, despondent — yes, and too proud to ask help. I know what it is to wander along the wharves and feel how easy it would be to put an end to trouble by a plunge."

She had laid down her work and was looking earnestly at him. He leaned forward a little.

"One winter — I was twenty-two then — I failed in my first business venture, and I could not get work. The few dollars I had went to my landlady. I had not made a score of bosom friends as some young men do; perhaps I was a disagreeable fellow. At any rate, there was no

one I could apply to except my step-father, who would have helped me of course, but I had quarreled with him, and to beg his aid was simply an impossibility. I would rather have stood on a corner and held out my hat. Well, and when my money was gone, my watch found its way to the pawnbroker's, and by and by my overcoat followed it. Some people I owed trifling sums dunned me and tormented me. I was ill to boot. Then I often strayed down to the wharves. The river was full of great cakes of ice, and it was those cakes of floating ice that saved me. It may seem inexplicable to you, but while the water terrified me not at all, the ice did. Why, I can't explain. Now, I am telling you what I never told a soul before. I sought work everywhere; I was willing to do anything, and at last I got a place in a shop in Front Street, and I stayed in it for six months on five dollars a week. Don't you think I know a little about hardship?"

She stretched out her hand to him without a word, but he held it only for a moment.

"Tell me the rest," she said.

"Oh, I began to prosper after that; to live up to my name, which sometimes had seemed a taunt. I got a place in the works of a run-down manufacturing concern, and I was lucky enough to make some improvements in the machinery at first, which gave me a hold on the firm, but I soon went into the office, and then it only needed push to set things going. I had the upper hand

from the start, and I could buy up all the stock to-day, if I chose to put my eggs into one basket. I talk as though it took no time," he added, with a little laugh, "but I was a mere workman for several years, and it was several more years before the debts were cleared and I could see my way plain. I had passed my thirty-fifth birthday before I dared to breathe free."

She glanced at him curiously.

"I am forty-one now," he said, in answer to her unasked question; "old enough to be sure, but young enough to make plans for the future, too. I have told you all this, because I want you to know that I understand what it means to have little or no money."

"Like Hugh," she said, simply.

"Who?"

"Hugh. You have not forgotten who he is?"

"Oh no, no, but he is Langmuir to me, you know."

He had forgotten him; he had forgotten all the world except the girl to whom he was talking, and she brought him to his senses so suddenly that he was bewildered for a minute. The natural outcome of his story of his past was to ask her to share his future, and as he thought of the years to come, he was filled with dismay. What was he to do? Go on living in a hotel, making money only to seek out investments for it? His whole being protested against that. Why should he not have home, wife, and child like other men?

Because, forsooth, his clerk had stolen the one woman in the world — his clerk, who would make her drudge for him, who would dim all the freshness of her youth. At that moment, he not only hated Hugh, but looked on him as a thief. What right had a beggarly boy to dream of chaining a woman down to his struggling fortunes? Hugh had taken a cowardly advantage of an ignorant girl whom chance had thrown in his way, and from whom he had wrung a promise to lead a life that must be hard at the outset, and might be always hard. A self-made man, knowing by bitter experience what success costs, takes a gloomier view of ambitious youth than a man born with a silver spoon in his mouth. To the latter the good things of life come so easily that he is bound to be something of an optimist. *Les affaires s'arrangent* is his belief, and if worse comes to worst, he can retire to a Jersey cottage and swear he would not be bothered by a yacht and a string of horses.

"One reason why Hugh is so anxious that we should be married now," said Pauline, "is that our boarding-place is very unpleasant. Some people have come lately who quarrel, and they will hardly speak to us. Not that we care about their speaking to us, but they are coarse people, and then they have a boy who is the most terrible boy I ever saw. Usually children are rather fond of me" — She looked up to Prosper with an apologetic smile, and was startled by his scowling face.

"I should think they might be," he said.

"Yes, and I am fond of them, but this boy takes pleasure in tormenting me."

"How?" Prosper asked.

"Oh, in little ways."

"Yes, but, for instance."

Pauline eyed her neck scarf critically before she answered.

"Well, for instance. he got hold of my heavy coat, but it was my fault, I ought not to have left it down-stairs, and in the pocket he put — now you will laugh, it was such a boyish trick — he put a dead mouse."

"He ought to be hung up by the heels," cried Prosper.

"That was what Hugh would have done," said Pauline, "so I did not dare tell him. As it is, Hugh has thrashed him once, and Mr. Fisher says that if Hugh touches the boy again he will call in the police."

"Fudge! the police could not interfere."

"They could make it very unpleasant, the Fishers and the police together, and there is strife enough in the house. Hugh says he must get away or he will kill that boy."

"And therefore he urges you to be married," said Prosper. This seemed to him the acme of selfishness on Hugh's part, but it made his blood boil to think of Pauline in such a household, exposed to the malicious pranks of a devil-born cub.

"That dead mouse was very nasty," said Paul-

ine, wrinkling her face in disgust. "I wanted to burn the coat up at once, and I am as anxious as Hugh to get away from the house. I must speak to Madame Kenyon about it, for if she is unwilling to have me leave in the middle of winter, I must stay until the school closes in June. Perhaps, though, she can get some one to take my place at once. She" — here Pauline hesitated.

"She what?" asked Prosper.

"She does not seem quite satisfied with me lately," Pauline answered, revealing a secret that she had not yet shared with Hugh.

The atmosphere of the library seemed to breed confidences. The fire was a mass of sighing embers, on the other side of the silken curtain was a ceaseless flow of women's talk, and in the dining-room, the butler was moving about in his silent fashion.

"Miss Valrey brought me some music of her mother's the other day," said Miss Berryan, in a louder tone, so that the words reached her brother distinctly, and he nodded to Pauline. "One of these gavottes might be just what you want," Miss Berryan continued. There was a murmur; then, "Oh yes, I 'll play one through for you, if you like. I suppose you could get them at Schirmer's easily enough."

She seated herself at the piano and played a gavotte, composed by one Arcangelo Corelli, who flourished in the seventeenth century. It was a quaint, tripping bit of music, which suggested

gentlemen in breeches and powdered wigs, and ladies in short-waisted gowns and high-heeled slippers. The squires led out the dames, there were bows and courtesies, flowery speeches; one could almost hear the tapping of a painted snuff-box.

But it was not such an old-time picture that the music brought to Pauline's mind. In her childhood, she had sometimes gone with her parents to the house of a music teacher, and Madame Valrey, to please her husband, had often played this gavotte. The familiar notes brought back her father and mother to Pauline, brought back her childhood, and she felt her lip quivering, the tears rising to her eyes. She bent her head lower, but Prosper rose and went to the window as soon as he saw the glitter on her eyelashes. He could not comfort her; he stood by the window biting his mustache nervously until the music stopped, then he went back to his chair. Pauline looked up with a wavering smile.

"My mother used to play that," she said.

"Yes, child, I know," he returned, hastily, raising his hand as if he would banish all sad memories.

Miss Berryan rushed into the room in a glow of excitement.

"I thought that woman would never go, and she has nearly talked me to death; and I was so glad Gilbert was here to keep you company, Pauline, for I am afraid I should have been rude

enough to try to get rid of Mrs. Stell, if I had not known that you were not left all alone, poor thing; and I am sorry to remind you, and you know I hate to have you go, but you said you could not stop to dinner, and the brougham is at the door, but I 'll send it away if you will change your mind; and if a woman can't change her mind when she likes, what is the use of being a woman? I say we stand up for our rights, and be just as changeable as men think we are, and that is more comfortable than to go off to the polls on a sloppy day to vote with a lot of politicians around, as I see them at election times, though a lady had better stay at home when elections are going on, and I am sure you agree with me, Pauline. Now shall I send the brougham back?"

"Yes," said Prosper.

"No," said Pauline, gathering up her work, "I must go home."

"Home," he echoed.

"My home now," she said.

XIII.

"You made no engagement for next Saturday, Pauline, I hope," was Hugh's greeting, as he helped her out of the brougham.

"No, next Saturday we will go and look up a flat," she returned, wearily.

"Are you tired, dear?"

"A little, yes."

"Did Miss Berryan talk all the time, and hold your poor hand?"

"Oh no, but she played some of mamma's music and it made me sad, and the rooms were very warm. My head aches."

Mrs. Fisher and her son were in the parlor, and Pauline, as she passed the door, heard her say, —

"Yes, Hermann, that was a carriage driving away, and if you were a girl, you might catch a rich friend, though I must say it would bring me down in sorrow to the grave to see you led off."

Pauline glanced at Hugh, who had not heard the innuendo, but her own cheeks burned hot. She felt guilty; these rich friends had led her a few steps out of her path, though not in the sense Mrs. Fisher meant.

"I don't believe I will go down to dinner," she said, as she mounted the stairs with a lagging step, Hugh close behind her.

"I think you had better," he returned. "It will make your headache worse if you don't eat. Is it very bad?"

"No, just a dull, heavy feeling. I made you a new scarf."

She gave it to him listlessly when she had reached the third floor. He kissed and thanked her. The gas had not been lighted, and as she entered her room in the darkness she fell against a chair. Hugh ran in to see if she had hurt herself.

"Wait, I'll light the gas for you," he said, fumbling about for a match. He lighted the ugly little burner by her bureau, and wished he dared stay and brush out her hair, and take off her boots, and bathe her hot face. He reflected scornfully that a few words spoken by a man in a black coat and white tie would make it right for him to perform such services; lacking those few words, his presence in her bed-room was half a crime, and he went out hastily, feeling what a mockery the form of marriage was when a man and woman loved each other and only asked to be allowed to spend their lives together. What did they care for a parson or a lawyer, for the mummery of a prayer-book, or the parade of a certificate?

Mr. Fisher came out of his room as Hugh came out of Pauline's, and striking a match the shoe dealer surveyed the young man from head to foot by the flickering flame; then with a quick gesture he put out the light and went down-stairs. Hugh's

contempt of the marriage form vanished. He could not marry her soon enough and take her away from this house and these people. He tapped at her door.

"Pauline, I am waiting for you."

"Don't wait; I am not going down."

"Yes, you must. I insist. Come at once, come."

His tone startled her. She smoothed her hair hastily and went out to him. He caught her by the hand.

"You shall not stay here another week, do you hear me, Pauline?"

"Is that all you had to say?" she asked, in displeasure.

He made no response, only kept her hand and led her to the dining-room. The Fishers all stared in supercilious silence as Hugh drew out her chair for her, and pushed it in place. He sat on one side of her, Mr. Kane on the other, while opposite was the Fisher phalanx, Mrs. Terry separating the warring companies. Mrs. Fisher thought her husband so great a man that she had paid him the compliment a wife does sometimes pay her husband, of growing to look as much like him as she could. She was small, faded, subdued; he, tall, rosy, belligerent, and yet the resemblance in their faces was striking. It lay chiefly in the mouth and the lines about it. The saying is that God shapes all our features except the mouth, and that we shape ourselves. The Fishers had fashioned

theirs after an extremely unpleasant pattern, and Mr. Fisher had not the decency to cover his thick, pasty, sneering lips with a mustache. Perhaps his wife had tried to shave because he did; certainly there were a few bristling black hairs showing at the corners of her mouth. The boy, who sat between his parents, was pale, fat, dull-eyed, with small ears set low and close on his head. When he smiled, which was not often, he showed a few teeth, stranded on a reef of red gum. He whined in speaking, and if his mother did not promptly heed his remarks at the table he kicked her viciously. Then it would be from her, tartly,

"Hermann, don't you have the cheek to do that again, now you mind."

"What did he do?" from Mr. Fisher.

"Why, kicked me."

"Well, he don't kick me much, and he would n't kick you if you did n't let him half the time and think it funny, but that 's the way with you. If you boxed his ears every time he give you any sass, he would n't bother you often. It is your own doing, Maria, and you 'd better have sense enough not to make a fuss about mischief of your own brewing."

Dinner passed off peacefully that evening, though without many attempts at conversation, and as soon as it was over Mr. Kane went up to his bed-ridden wife, the Fishers took possession of the parlor, and Pauline and Hugh lingered in the dining-room, where the smell of meat and potatoes always filled the air.

"I had a visitor to-day," he said. "My cousin Thomas stepped in to shake me by the hand. We lunched together, too, and he was disappointed to find me doing so well. He wants me to take charge of a paper mill that he has been forced to buy, — he held the mortgage on it, and it is a white elephant on his hands."

"Where is it?" Pauline asked, without much interest.

"At home, near the village. It is in a grove of maples, with a stream running through it. He tempted me, Pauline. He offered me a house and a certain per cent. of the profits of the mill. And it is a good house, and I should be quite my own master."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"You must do as you think best, Hugh."

"I don't know what is best. If I went there, I should have a sure thing, I suppose, but it would never amount to much. I could make a good living, and in time, perhaps, buy the mill out and out. Still, I would never be rich from that. I understand enough about the paper manufacturing business to know that a small concern would have no show. It needs capital; everything does for that matter."

He looked at her again.

"Surely, you don't expect me to decide," she exclaimed.

"Well, no; but if you thought you could be happy living there in the country — Cousin Tom

held out pretty strong inducements, and with him to back me up, I am not sure but what I might make a good thing out of it. It is n't what I hoped to do. There is n't the chance here in New York that I thought there was, however, and I don't see how I can advance a step beyond where I am now for a long, long time. I shall always be looking for something better, perhaps never to find it."

He needed only her encouragement to accept his cousin's offer, but she did not say a word. She felt as if to go into the country would be to end everything.

"Hugh," she said at last, "you must decide. Of course I would be happy anywhere with you."

"Yes, dear, I know. You are too good to speak out and say that you would rather stay here. I need not decide at once. If I went back to the village it would not be until spring, and I told my cousin that I must think it over before I gave him an answer. Pauline, you ought to have seen him. He is a real, true, country store-keeper, and the people in the restaurant down town pointed him out to each other. He told me he had been stopped by confidence men on his way to the office, but he is very wide awake, for all his country cut."

"Is he rich?" she asked.

"Up in the country he is. He is worth fifty or sixty thousand dollars. Jim Whyte says that your Miss Berryan has an income of twenty-five thousand dollars. What do you suppose she does with it? That represents about half a million, nowadays."

"And you and I are rich on twelve hundred dollars," said Pauline, with a wan smile.

"We could live uncommonly well on that in the country. It is rent here that kills a man. There are flats without an atom of furniture that rent for thousands of dollars. And the one I want you to look at will cost more than I like to think about."

She frowned impatiently.

"Perhaps we had better wait, Hugh. And we could board."

"Oh, I want my own home," he exclaimed. "Where we could afford to board, we would run the risk of meeting people like the Fishers, or not much better. I have had enough of New York boarding-houses. We can manage. In all this big city there must be a nest for us somewhere. Don't be disheartened, dear."

"But you are disheartened, Hugh."

"Indeed I am not, only I am growing old and wise."

He pulled out the ends of his mustache, that no razor had ever touched, and which was as soft as Pauline's hair. He looked older than his years, though his figure had not lost its boyish outlines yet.

"I must have a talk with Mr. Prosper," he said. "I will tell him that I have a chance to go into business on my own account. Maybe he will think it worth while to keep me with him; perhaps he does not care to stick to his desk so closely as he has heretofore, and in that case he will need

a man to do something more than merely take charge of the books. He works like a galley-slave, and I should think he would like to rest on his oars."

Pauline absently traced a line on the table-cloth with her finger. She did not say that she had spent the best part of the afternoon with Gilbert Prosper; she did not repeat a word of his confidences.

"What are you thinking about?" Hugh asked.

"Oh, I don't know." She rose and pushed back her chair. "I am going up to bed. I am tired out."

"Poor little woman," he said, tenderly; and after she had gone, he sat there, thinking, thinking, thinking, until Mrs. Terry came in. She was tired too, tired and cross.

"Those Fishers will be the death of me," she said, "but I can't expect to always get folks like you and the Kanes and the Valreys. When I remember old M'seer, I am ready to sit down and cry."

She was sewing, and she bit off a needleful of thread fiercely.

"Keeping boarders is a slave's trade," she continued, "but what is a woman to do? I can't pick and choose; I want to get rid of those Fishers, but I don't dare send 'em away in the middle of winter. They pay, and I need every penny I can earn. I scrape and save and I just worry along. I don't know what will become of me when I am too old to work. I'll have to go out and beg, likely."

Her face twitched, and a tear rolled over her cheek slowly. She was a woman; she longed for a word of sympathy and affection.

"Oh, Mrs. Terry," said Hugh, "don't be cast down. There are a good many people in the world worse off than we are — people who look on us with envy."

"You," she cried, "you may well be cheerful. Ain't you getting a big salary, and ain't you a man, and can't you do what you like? And ain't you going to marry the nicest girl in all New York? If you ain't contented, then you 'd ought to be, that 's all I have to say."

"We always want a little more than we have," he returned. "When I was getting nine hundred dollars, I thought I should be happy with twelve hundred, and now that I have twelve hundred, I fume and fret because it is n't two thousand."

"Human nature," said Mrs. Terry, curtly.

"Yes, human nature," he echoed.

He stayed talking with her until nine o'clock struck, and then he went up-stairs. Around Pauline's door were lines of light that showed she had not yet found forgetfulness of all this worrying world in sleep. He went into his own room, separated from hers by a thin partition, and after he was in bed he heard her moving softly about. What was she doing, he wondered.

This is what she was doing. The looping of the overskirt of her best black dress did not

please her, and she had taken it out to loop it again in the fashion of one of Miss Berryan's costly gowns. It was not so easy a task as she had fancied it would be, and she looked at the result ruefully. Finally, she slipped the dress on herself, and tried to get a good view of it in the little mirror. Turn the glass as she would, propping it up with her brush, tilting it forward with her comb, she could not see to her own satisfaction how that overskirt hung. Back and forth she walked, craning her neck, now over one shoulder, then over the other, the frown on her face deepening.

"Bother that wretched little glass," she exclaimed, and taking the dress off hastily, she pulled the pins out of it and restored it to the first looping, sewing furiously, and going to bed at last with a singularly injured, martyr-like expression pulling down the corner of her mouth. There was a beautiful long mirror in Miss Berryan's dressing-room, wherein one could see the very hem of one's gown reflected. It was when she had seen herself in that mirror that Pauline had discovered the ungracefulness of her overskirt, and like a flash it came across her that perhaps she had been wearing ungraceful dresses all her life without knowing it.

XIV.

On the next Saturday, Hugh took Pauline to see the flat in Ninety-Second Street. They went up on the elevated road, skirting along the edge of the squatters' settlement, where hovels cling to rocks, and goats, curs, and ragamuffins thrive under the very noses of the rich. Pauline looked down on the scene, discovering no droll or picturesque elements in a life which, to her morbid fancy, seemed just then to threaten her own.

"How would you like to live there?" Hugh said, pointing out a tiny, whitewashed shanty, approached by a tottering flight of steps. Poor and mean as it was, the hut had a snug, cozy look; there was a red curtain at the window; the snow lay white on the roof, and through a bit of stovepipe curled a wisp of smoke.

She shuddered by way of reply, but Hugh dilated on the charms of such a residence. They could raise cabbages; they might even keep a cow, — a pig would be an absolute necessity, — and in summer it would be cool and delightful on the vine-hung porch. Pauline was in no mood for foolery. The stretches of vacant lots, the clusters of cheap houses, even more than the squatters' huts, brought to her mind vividly the life she was

to lead, a life lacking in all beauty. She glanced furtively at Hugh, who was absorbed in certain calculations about rent and fuel, and who did not become conscious of her study of him for several minutes. When he felt her eyes fixed upon him, he turned and saw the dissatisfaction in their depths.

"Harlem isn't heaven, I know," he said. "Perhaps over in Jersey we might do better. This is our station, Pauline, and yonder is the house."

It was a brick building, standing by itself in a little desert of vacant lots where the snow lay untrodden, and to its face clung rows of tiny balconies, connected by a zigzag line of steep iron ladders. There was no elevator, only a winding staircase, lighted by a pane of red glass in the roof, and the flat Hugh thought of renting was on the fifth floor. He clasped Pauline's hand, and so they climbed up, up, and as they drew nearer and nearer the gaudy pane of glass, her heart sank lower and lower, for there was the sickening smell of poverty in the air; there was the look of poverty about the gloomy landings.

"Here we are," said Hugh, cheerfully; and he rang the bell at a door that had not only been opened by dirty hands, but kicked by impatient feet. A slatternly maid of all work ushered them in. The flat was occupied still by a family, and a swarm of tow-headed children followed Hugh and Pauline about, as they went from room to room, guided by the frouzy servant. There were

only four little rooms all told, of which three gave on a small court, but the flat was so high up that even the court windows admitted light enough. Despite the dirt and confusion, Pauline saw the possibilities of the place. It could be scrubbed, scoured, furnished neatly, and be made a cozy home. Her spirits rose; the woman's longing to rule over a kingdom of her own stirred within her. Presently, the lady of the house appeared, a big, blowzy, good-natured creature, who took a warm interest in the young couple. She fancied they were bride and groom."

"There ain't room enough for us," she said. "I have got four children already and we must get a larger flat, but for a small family, it does first rate. Having children is an awful trouble and expense! My gracious, you have n't any idea what a baby costs! And such a little thing, too! And yet you can't help being kind of weak and foolish about it. Harold, you let Ethel alone."

This was addressed sharply to a curly-headed boy, who was thrusting a headless horse into his long-suffering sister's mouth. He had a roguish pair of blue eyes, and he smiled up at his mother in an engaging way, whereupon she confided to Pauline proudly that Harold was his pa right over again, and then she kissed him. There might be dirt and confusion in this home, but there was love too, and Hugh's eyes met Pauline's. They had something in common, after all, with this coarse, loud, vulgar woman. She showed them

all about, and finally she exclaimed, putting her hands on her hips and planting her feet apart,—

"Now, I 'll say this right out, though my husband told me I 'd better keep it to myself. The wind comes through these walls, and it takes an awful lot of coal to keep warm here. Now just you look."

She struck a match and held it near the window-casing. The flame was puffed out, leaving a nauseous smell of sulphur.

"There!" she cried, in triumph.

Hugh nodded dubiously. He thought he could tinker those window-casings, but when he laid his hand on the cracks in the wood-work, the winter air struck cold on his palm.

"Humph," he said. "Well, we won't trouble you any longer, Madam. I think we have seen pretty nearly enough to satisfy us."

He and Pauline went down the stairs, the amiable lady leaning over the banisters to watch them, her children hanging to her skirts and thrusting their chubby legs between the railings.

Pauline drew a breath of relief when she was once more in the clear, crisp air. "But, Hugh," she said, "it could be made very comfortable."

"I am afraid we might freeze to death," he returned.

"Oh, that woman does not know how to manage; we could keep the wind out. Now, why does a man ever want such a wife as that? And what do you suppose *he* is like?"

"Don't try to solve the problem of affinities," he said, gayly. "She is a good soul in her way, and she may have been fair to look upon when her husband was courting her."

"Ugh!" said Pauline.

She slipped her hand through his arm and talked rapturously all the way to the station of carpets and chairs and tables. The flat was better than she had expected; the dirt had not dismayed her a whit, for she had faith in soap and water, and her bright mood filled Hugh's heart with gladness. Sometimes, she gave an ecstatic little skip and clung closer to his arm, talking all the time.

"We will give a house-warming, Hugh; we will have Mrs. Terry and Mr. Kane and Miss Berryan and Madame Kenyon and Mr. Prosper, and your friend, Jim Whyte. Would n't that make a *mélange*, eh?"

She laughed up in his face so joyously that a benevolent old gentleman passing by smiled, and stood for a minute looking after the young couple.

"Jim made ten thousand dollars the other day in oil," Hugh said.

"Goodness, how did he do it?"

He glanced down at her. "Where did you catch that word 'goodness'? You have taken to using it on all occasions lately."

"Miss Berryan's pet word," she answered. "But tell me, how does one make ten thousand dollars in oil?"

"Speculating, of course."

"Oh, Hugh, won't you speculate?"

"With what, if you please? My earnings? Thank you, no."

"With my money. I will give it all to you; you go to Jim Whyte and float it in oil."

"I would not touch a penny of your little fortune, Pauline."

"But you must. And then we should be rich, too."

"We might be poor, too," he said, grimly. "You are growing very mercenary; you used to preach to me about the sweetness of a contented spirit, and now you want me to speculate."

His words sobered her, and for a while she walked in silence.

"You see, Hugh," she said, "when I talked about contentment, I had no idea of the things money would buy — not so much the big things, the little ones; not a carriage, for instance, but plenty of *eau de cologne* to put in the water when you wash your hands. That is my notion of *le vrai luxe*."

"Oh, *le vrai luxe*," he echoed, blankly, with a strong English accent.

She gave a soft cry of horror. "My own dear boy, do you suppose you will ever learn the French *u*?"

"Have I much more to learn about the French you?" he said, with superb audacity. "I know it is very sweet and quite beyond any English you."

This atrocity she punished with a moan that made Hugh press her hand closer to his side in sheer delight, and he said: —

"You are dancing all over the walk. What will people think of you?"

"I don't care for people. Who are people? There is only you and I."

"And Miss Berryan," he added. "I am jealous of her. She is desperately in love with you; she would like to carry you off, but she can't. I have got you and I mean to keep you, all the rich, sentimental spinsters in New York to the contrary notwithstanding."

The serious consideration of chairs and tables melted away before such talk as this, but Pauline and he that evening drew up a list of the household articles they would need, consulting Mrs. Terry about prices, and sending her into fits of laughter by their absurd notions. The cost of pans and kettles made Pauline's face lengthen a little. She scanned the list anxiously, striking out what she thought might not be absolutely necessary, and yet the sum total was a figure which, to her eyes, was appalling. She nibbled the end of her pencil thoughtfully.

"I had no idea that kitchen things cost so much," she said. "There is one consolation: iron does n't wear out."

"Oh, don't it though?" Mrs. Terry exclaimed. "And a servant girl just delights in a smash-up. As for cracking plates and nicking 'em, that 's real fun." Her tone was extremely sarcastic.

"Is thin glassware very expensive?" Pauline asked, timidly.

"Yes, it 's expensive, and it don't last any time at all. If you want thin glass and pretty china, you 'll have to wash your own dishes; not wash 'em once in a while, but regular."

"I would not mind that," said Pauline.

Mrs. Terry looked at the girl's hands. These were slim and white, and Miss Berryan had lately presented her with a plush case full of little ivory backed tools and curved scissors, and Pauline's nails were consequently delicately trimmed and beautifully polished. Miss Berryan had a manicure attend her once a week. This had at first seemed ridiculous to Pauline, then not ridiculous, but pleasant.

"Dish-cloths will take the shine out of your fingers," said Mrs. Terry, brutally. "Housework is death and destruction on hands."

She held out hers; rough, red, and with hard, white nails, that were broken off painfully near the flesh. Pauline winced in spite of herself, and Hugh saw the involuntary contortion of her face. He smoothed her slim fingers tenderly.

"I 'll wash the dishes," he said.

Mrs. Terry laughed. "You 'd look sweet, washing dishes and making beds and dusting, besides trotting off to the office every morning. No, a woman has her work, and if she 's too fine to do it, then she'd better think twice before she starts in."

"Oh, don't, Mrs. Terry," said Pauline, in distress. "I am not fine; I used to help my mother about the housework, and I am not afraid of my hands. You and Hugh seem to consider me a vain, useless creature."

"No," said Mrs. Terry, "but you was n't made for work, and there is no getting around that. To some girls scrubbing comes natural, and to other girls it ain't natural. I don't know much about your folks in France, but I 'll bet your grandmothers sat around playing the piano and embroidering, and looking always as neat as a pink. They did n't poke their noses into the cellar to see what the girl had done with the cold potatoes and the beef drippings. No, sir, not much."

Hugh thought of his own mother. It filled him with something akin to remorse as he remembered how often he had seen her bending over an ironing-board on a warm summer day, and how often he had kissed her good-night, he going off to bed tired and sleepy, leaving her with a pile of children's clothing to mend. She had never complained, and to him it had seemed simply the natural order of things that she should be up early, working always, ready to fashion a bag for his marbles or bind up a bleeding hand, cooking little dishes for his father, making a dress for his sister, doing it all with such sweet patience that nobody ever thought of her being tired. But now he thought of it, and she was to him like a saint. She had once been as fair and fresh as Pauline,

and he looked at the girl's grave face earnestly, wondering if she must grow faded and anxious-eyed in a few short years of work and worry.

When she went up-stairs for the night, he followed her, and in the upper hall, — where they always paused for a last word, he said: —

"Pauline, I am very selfish. Perhaps I ought not to marry you until I can give you a better home than I can now."

"Ah, no, Hugh. I am the selfish one; I look to you to take care of me. You are to work hard all day, while I sit at home repairing the damage done to my nails by washing a few cups and saucers."

She laughed, but he could not laugh with her.

"I have made up my mind on this point," he said. "If Mr. Prosper does not give me some encouragement, if he does not come out squarely and tell me that if I stay and work to his satisfaction — *that* I can do, I know — he will advance me steadily, I will accept my cousin's offer."

"What, Hugh, go off somewhere in the country?"

"Yes, home. There are plenty of people there to welcome you and me, and we could have a comfortable house, a garden, all the air and sunshine a mortal ever had, instead of being cooped up in a few dark, narrow rooms. I doubt if we should ever be rich as one understands riches here in New York, but we should never be cramped and pinched. My cousin is a shrewd, far-seeing

man, and when he assures me, in his cautious way, that I could make a good living out of the paper mill, I know very well what it means. It does not mean a coupé and a theatre box; it does mean a quiet home and a horse to drive over the hills. Oh, Pauline, you don't know what it is to long for the hills, to be hungry for the sight of fields. I shall always be a countryman at heart."

"Then, Hugh, let us go back to the country you love," she said. "I should find the life strange at first, but what do I care for New York?"

"We will see what Mr. Prosper says," he returned. "I cannot give up all my hopes without a struggle, sweet as the country looks to me now. Perhaps I should be discontented there. I want to be a rich man; I have always dreamed of ranking high in the world, using wealth as a lever, and whether I could be happy in a humdrum village or not, I do not know. Just now, I feel as though an obscure, tranquil life was the best; tomorrow I may feel as though I must fight my way up out of the ranks. And now, good-night, sweetheart. Whatever happens, wherever I go, you will be with me to make my life worth living."

XV.

THEY left the office together, and Hugh supposed that Prosper would go up town on the elevated road as usual, but instead, he hailed a cab.

"Ride along with me," he said. "I am bound for my sister's — got some papers for her to sign. You don't know Miss Jane Berryan, do you?"

"I have not that honor," Hugh answered.

"Well, she is a shrewd woman in her way, but she is possessed to sign papers without reading them. I could get her to put her name to anything, and I shall have to be as ugly as I know how to induce her to read these documents in my pocket. Read 'em she must. I hate to look after other people's concerns, and if I should drop off, deuce knows what my sister would do. She won't trust our lawyer, as honest a man as ever stepped; she has the feminine notion that all lawyers are rogues. A good many men have the same notion. For my part, I think lawyers an honorable set of men, and I have had plenty of dealings with them, too. It is a maligned class. For one that steals, ten thousand don't, though they have plenty of chance. Ever smoke, Langmuir?"

He offered his case to Hugh, who took a cigar, saying, —

"Yes, I smoke a pipe. I can't afford the cigars I like, so I don't buy any. And lately, I have been sailing pretty close, because I want to marry as soon as I can, and I have done what the pious papers tell a poor young man to do — saved my pennies that might otherwise have gone for beer and cigars."

"Very creditable," said Prosper, dryly. He leaned back in the corner of the cab, crossed his legs, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of his tobacco. They were in a tangle of drays and carriages and advanced slowly, stopping every now and then. It was late in the afternoon. The sidewalks were crowded with men, hurrying in one direction; the street was jammed with vehicles of all sorts, and the drivers shouted to their horses and swore at each other. The din was deafening, and Hugh smoked in silence until the cab began to roll along comfortably in line.

"Mr. Prosper," he said, "I have something to say to you."

"I know it, Langmuir, and if you take my advice, you won't say it. Don't turn kicker. I let Hilyer go because he was forever bothering me. You have some sense. Book-keepers are as plenty as blackberries. And you are a young man and doing as well as can be expected, as the doctor says of his lady patients."

"Well, I beg your pardon, but I must ask if there is any chance of my getting beyond book-keeping."

"That depends on yourself. Just let me tell you this much, though. The moment an employee begins to feel he is invaluable, his employer has no use for him."

Hugh was nettled. "I don't think I am invaluable; I know that book-keepers are as plenty as blackberries. As long as you stick to the office in this way, you don't need anything but decent machines in your men. If you take it into your head to enjoy yourself, let up a little on the eternal grind, why then you need something more than mere machines. If you had confidence in anybody's abilities, except your own, you could take life a bit easy."

Prosper burst out laughing. "Hear the boy talk!" he exclaimed. "If you were in my place, would you take life easy, and let a greenhorn like you run the concern? Come, come, Langmuir, you are going it pretty strong."

"Oh, I don't mean that," said Hugh, laughing, too; "but I could look after the details of office work well enough. What I wanted to say was this. I have a cousin" —

"Oh, Lord," groaned Prosper, "and Hilyer had a son-in-law! Does your cousin live in Terre Haute?"

"He lives in Hullton, in Northern New York, and he wants me to run his paper mill."

"The paper business is in the hands of a few firms who practically control the trade," said Prosper, with decision.

"This is a small concern," Hugh began.

"Yes," murmured Prosper, "just like Hilyer's son-in-law's. And your cousin is sick, and if you don't come at once, he will hang himself. The alternative is that I raise your salary."

"The alternative is," said Hugh, his face flushing, "that I accept my cousin's offer, unless you say that if I stay with you, you will give me a chance to work my way into the company and make some money."

Prosper whistled. "There is a good deal of modesty in your composition, Mr. Langmuir. I cannot help admiring the force of your remarks."

"That will do," said Hugh, hastily, afraid lest Prosper should venture to carry his sneer too far. "That settles it. You can look up another bookkeeper. They are as plenty as blackberries. You can pick a bushel of 'em off Trinity Church railing. I will go up to the country, where I can give my wife some of the comforts of life."

The blood went out of Prosper's face, then surged back in a hot torrent.

"Have you married her already?" he said, and as he spoke, he leaned forward to jerk the ash of his cigar off through the cab window.

"No, but I will at once, and take her with me to my own people. I have friends there," Hugh added, bitterly.

Prosper held out his hand to him. "Langmuir, I beg your pardon. I don't want you to leave with the idea that I am not a friend. You must

see, though, that you ask a good deal of me. You fairly took my breath away. Hilyer was nothing to you."

"Oh, that 's all right," said Hugh, awkwardly. "You see, I have been trying to find a flat, and calculating the expense of living, and it just drove me crazy to see how little I could do on my salary. A man does not want his wife to work her fingers to the bone" —

He paused to smile at Prosper, who nodded, but said nothing.

"And then," Hugh continued, "along came my cousin with his offer. There in the country we could have a house of our own, and live decently. Do you wonder, Mr. Prosper, that I am going to take my wife there, rather than keep her here in New York?"

He waited a long time for the response. Prosper was pulling furiously at his cigar, and knitting his brows. At last he said, gently, —

"No, Langmuir, I don't wonder at it. She is a sweet and lovely girl, and you are right to do the very best you can for her. I have got pretty well acquainted with her at my sister's house, you know."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I know."

"I don't want to make any rash promises," Prosper continued, "but I like you, Langmuir, there is good stuff in you, and you can count on me to give you a chance. You had better stay here than marry in haste and go off to that God-

forsaken village. Don't marry to-morrow. Wait a year, if you want to give your wife a comfortable home. I am willing that you should prove yourself able to take some of the load off my shoulders. You are right; I do work too hard. I will give you what Hilyer had — fifteen hundred, to start with, and if everything runs along smoothly, why, in the course of a year you may be worth twice that to me. Now, it depends on you."

Hugh grasped his hand; he could not speak.

"Oh, you need n't be so damned grateful," said Prosper, harshly. "Why should n't you work into the concern? Who is to get it? I can't expect to live forever, and I shall have no son to save the business for."

His last words were fraught with regret beneath the scoffing tone, and Hugh felt vaguely sorry for him. He made bold to say, —

"Why don't you marry?"

"Humph! I should, I suppose, if I were as poor as you are. When I was clerking it, I did not chance to run across any Miss Pauline Valrey, and therefore I am a bachelor. Of course I fell in love with my landlady's daughter, — every clerk is bound to do that, — but I did n't marry her, thank God; I escaped."

He was speaking absolute truth, though Hugh did not suspect it. At the age of twenty-one, he had indeed been in love with his landlady's daughter, and it had been such a fleeting passion that he believed all such youthful affairs were likewise

fleeting. There was a little gold key dangling at his watch-chain. It was the key of a box of perfume that he had given to her, and why he had kept it he could not have told. He had almost forgotten how he had come by it, but now remembering, he detached the key from the chain, and flung it into the street with his cigar. He had the satisfaction of seeing both ground under an omnibus wheel.

Hugh had not noticed what his companion was doing. His mind was in a joyous tumult. He wanted to leap out of this slow-going cab, and run home at the top of his speed to give Pauline the good news. As for putting off his marriage, that idea he dismissed. They could be married at once, and set up housekeeping. Fifteen hundred a year! three thousand a year! a share in the business! He grew giddy thinking of it all. The prospect dazzled his eyes, and he closed them unconsciously, the better to dream of the glowing future.

"Going to sleep, Langmuir?"

"No, I was only trying to collect my senses. I am rather dazed, Mr. Prosper. You don't want me to say anything, but you know that you have made me the happiest man in the world."

"Why so? You put me into a corner, jammed me up against the fence, and pounded me black and blue. Now, you are grateful because I cried hands off. And I haven't done anything wonderful. I have only said that if you do good

work you shall have good pay, and that 's shop, not sentiment."

They were nearing Fourteenth Street, and Hugh said, —

"I had better get out here and take a car across town, and go up in the Third Avenue elevated."

"Hurry to get home?" Prosper asked, good-humoredly, as he tapped on the glass to the driver.

"Well, yes. You know my father is a parson, so I happen to have heard that 'as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.'"

"And is Platt Street a far country?" said Prosper.

"It is to Harloe Row. Thanks for bringing me up town and sending me off with such uncommonly good news."

Hugh gripped Prosper's hand, hesitated, then, leaving warmer words unspoken, dashed away. As the cab jogged on again, Prosper took a note out of his pocket which he had received three hours before. It ran thus: —

DEAR GILBERT: —

I can't meet you at the lawyer's this afternoon. Miss Valrey is here, and I have asked her to drive in the Park with me. She is to stay all night, and I really feel as though it would be rude to leave her quite alone. She says I must tell you it is not her fault. In haste, JANE.

Underneath was a line or two in another hand, fine and flowing, very unlike Miss Berryan's bold chirography: —

"Don't think I kept her; I tried to make her meet you."

Prosper re-read the note with a foolish smile, and then tore it into bits slowly, except the postscript, which he studied for a minute, but finally tore that up too. The cab was opposite his hotel and he bade the driver stop, and when he did stop told him to go on again, giving his sister's address. He still held the tiny scraps of paper in his hand, and it was with an air of regret that he tossed them through the convenient window.

He found his sister and Miss Valrey just returned from their drive. The winter wind had brought bright color to Pauline's cheeks, and she looked quite at home, standing by the leaping fire in the library, her jacket unbuttoned and her hat pushed back a little on her head, a few straying hairs clinging to the brim.

"Why, your hand is like ice," said Prosper, as he took it to greet her, and he rubbed it between his palms for a moment.

"We went up through Riverside Park, though we were in the victoria, and the roads were simply awful," said Miss Berryan; "but the hills looked beautiful with the snow on them, and we did n't think to turn back until we grew chilly; and then there was the long drive home again, and Pauline had forgotten her muff, and she would not keep

her hands under the rug all I could do, and we were both nearly frozen."

"I should think so," said Prosper.

"But the drive was lovely," Pauline murmured, half to herself, smiling absently.

"Oh, lovely, of course, but you two foolish girls need somebody to look after you. And because of this lovely freezing drive, I had to come and bring these papers." He took them out of his pocket and shook them at Pauline, reproachfully. "It is owing to you."

"Scold her," cried Miss Berryan, in glee, as she hurried out of the room.

"I am very sorry," said Pauline, in a contrite tone, — "very sorry indeed."

"You need n't be," he returned, dryly.

She turned back to the fire again, holding her hands out to the warm blaze, and he watched her until she glanced at him over her shoulder, and then he took a step nearer her.

"In fact, I am glad to have such a good excuse for coming," he added.

Miss Berryan bustled into the room again, pulling off her gloves.

"Give me those papers, Gilbert," she said, seating herself at the table and choosing one of the pens that grew up out of a squat onyx vase. "I will sign them and be done with them in a jiffy, whatever a jiffy may be. I told Bates to get out some of that Yquem. You will stay to dinner, of course?"

"If I may stay as I am," he answered.

"Why should n't you? We don't make toilets every night."

"You ought to. If I ever have a house of my own, I shall expect my wife to put on her prettiest dress every night, and I will get into a swallow-tail myself. I believe in it. It has all come up, though, within a few years, this dressing every evening. Now, nearly every man does it. Sign of civilization, I suppose."

"Oh, it is so English," said his sister, with a little grimace. "And we have haberdashers nowadays, and stores are shops, and we speak of trades-people, and Miss Schoonhoven talks about dissenters, which is truly too ridiculous, and it does seem to me as though New York was crazy. And five o'clock tea. Why, even up in Troy — that is where I used to live, you know, Pauline — they have five o'clock tea. I am not so very old, but in the last ten years America has just turned around. All my relations are in trade, and I can't see much difference between people who are making money and people who have made it."

"Can't you?" said Prosper. "I can see a good deal of difference; but as I am still making mine, I am in a business suit, and I would like to wash my hands."

They trooped up-stairs together, as if they had lived in the same house for fifty years, Miss Berryan talking on about New York and society and the world in general. Jennie met them in the up-

per hall. She never came to the evening dinner, but had a bread and milk supper in the nursery, a plan which Miss Berryan would have felt outraged had any one hinted that it was extremely un-American, wholesome though it was.

"Oh, Cousin Gilbert, you here again?" cried Jennie. And he explained to her elaborately how he was forced to come and bring important papers. She listened to him with a roguish smile, and tossed her golden head wisely; then shot a wicked glance upward at him, and ran off to the nursery in a peal of mocking laughter.

"She is a little goose," said Prosper, an uncomfortable flush mounting in his face. "Upon my word, Jane, sometimes I am afraid she is n't all right here." He tapped his forehead significantly.

Jennie, who was looking through the crack in the nursery door, heard the words and saw the action.

"Yes, I am all right there, too, Cousin Gilbert," she shouted, and off she went into another uncontrollable fit of giggles.

Prosper stared helplessly at his sister and at Pauline, who were trying not to laugh at his evident discomfiture. His brow darkened; he took a step towards the nursery door, but Jennie screamed and shut it in his very face. That angered him still more. He flung the door open, and Jennie retreated in fright to the farthest corner of the room.

"Cousin Jane, Miss Valrey, don't let him hurt me!" she cried, in abject terror, cowering under his threatening eyes.

"I won't hurt you," he said, "but you had better learn not to give me any of your impertinence. Understand that."

She burst out crying; she was frightened to the very depths of her craven soul. Pauline hastened to her, giving Prosper a reproachful glance as she passed him.

"I did n't mean to alarm her," he said, in deep humility.

"Go 'way!" shouted Jennie to Pauline, stamping her foot in rage. "Go 'way. I don't want you. I hate you. Go 'way!"

Then Miss Berryan tried to soothe the infuriated child, who stood in the corner crying and shrieking, terrified, and senseless with anger. She would not let Miss Berryan come near her; she began to run about the room, screaming louder and louder.

"Go 'way, all of you. Don't let Cousin Gilbert hurt me. He lied, he lied, he lied!"

"Hold your tongue," said Gilbert, while the two ladies looked at each other in horror. "Jennie," he added, in a gentler tone, "come here to me. I have something in my pocket for you."

"You have n't; that 's a lie, too. You tell lies."

As he approached her she retreated behind a table, seized a book, and hurled it at his head. His sister, who saw that he was losing his self-

control, caught him by the arm and begged him to leave the room; but he would only go as far as the door, where he stood gnawing his lip.

"Jennie," said Miss Berryan, "stop this at once." She took the child by the hand and drew her to her firmly. "Now, Jennie, nobody is going to hurt you. I will take care of you. Sit on my lap — there, so."

She wiped the tears away, and the child's cries sank to stifled sobs as Miss Berryan soothed and caressed her.

"Is the storm over?" said Prosper, with a sneer, and at this Jennie started up fiercely.

"He said he came to bring those papers, and he lied, he lied!"

"Hush!" exclaimed Miss Berryan. But Prosper turned quickly and went away, running across the nurse in the hall.

"Go in there and murder that young one, or make her hold her tongue," he said.

"Why, Jennie, my darlin', what does all this mean?" said the nurse, lifting Jennie in her arms like a baby. "There, there, my pet. Now be a good girl. Katy 's got you."

It did not seem to make much difference to the pet who had her; she bit and shrieked and kicked, and the two ladies left the room. Gradually the cries died away, and everything was so still that Prosper, down in the library, wondered if Jennie was dead, and rather hoped she was.

Pauline stood before the dressing-table in Miss

Berryan's room, trying to arrange her tumbled hair, but her hands trembled violently and her heart beat hard.

"She has a terrible temper, and she must be taught to control it, for this is simply awful and it has quite used me up," said Miss Berryan, from the adjoining bath-room, where she was washing her hands. "I declare, if she had these fits of rage often, I don't know what I should do with her. She did n't know what she was saying."

This last was spoken in an apologetic tone, which brought a wave of color to Pauline's cheeks. The color ebbed away, leaving her paler than before. The walls of the room seemed to be echoing Jennie's passionate words.

"He said he came to bring those papers, and he lied!"

A shiver ran through her as she mechanically caught up her hair and fixed it in place. Her colorless cheeks annoyed her, and she rubbed them hard with her hands. She bit her lips to bring the blood back to them, but do what she would her face reflected in the mirror did not look natural to her.

"Are you ready to go down?" said Miss Berryan, briskly.

Pauline nodded, and they went to Prosper together, their arms around each other's waists like school-girls. He was reading a newspaper, which he lowered at their entrance.

"Have you put the vixen to bed?" he said.

"Scenes of this description go far towards reconciling a bachelor to his lonely lot. She has excellent lungs, our amiable Jennie. You will never have to take her to a mild climate, Jane, unless you feel as though she would make a luscious morsel for a Florida alligator."

He scratched the tip of his ear thoughtfully, but his sister took up cudgels in defense of the naughty darling. Jennie was tired; Jennie had been to the dentist's; Jennie was nervous and easily frightened; Jennie was this, that, and the other, to all of which he listened, meanwhile covertly watching Pauline. She was conscious of his gaze, and betrayed it. At last, she lifted her eyes to his with mute entreaty, whereupon he smiled and moistened his lips, but he did not look her way again, except when he addressed her.

They were subdued at dinner. It was as though they had come through a storm, safely, indeed, but weak and bruised. Later, when they were back in the library, they were very silent. Miss Berryan read her law documents with an air of resignation, but presently she went to the piano, and looked over her music.

"May I play something?" she asked, in meekness and humiliation of spirit.

"Yes, but something frivolous," her brother answered. "None of those lugubrious funeral marches that you are so fond of."

She played German waltzes, and most of them were pervaded by characteristic melancholy.

"Oh, give us something sad, if that is what you call cheerful!" said Prosper.

"Well, here is a funeral march," she returned, "but it needs an orchestra to bring it out. I heard it played in the theatre at Monaco, and it had a great effect on me, but perhaps it was because I had been led into gambling by my friends, — the Merwins, you know, Gilbert; and old Mr. Merwin carries a plate in church, but he would put down some money on the roulette table at Monte Carlo, and Mrs. Merwin and I were shocked; but we did it, too, and lost twenty francs apiece, trying it to get five francs back."

Then she played *Le Marche funèbre d'une Marionette.*

The fantastic trifle pleased Prosper.

"It 's queer, is n't it?" he said, softly, to Pauline.

She whispered "Yes," and listened with bated breath. It was more than queer to her; it was weird, mysterious. The door-bell rang sharply, but Miss Berryan gave no heed. She went on playing until the servant ushered Hugh Langmuir into the bright room. He was pale, his hair was disordered, and he looked hither and thither in bewilderment. When he caught a glimpse of Pauline, he approached her quickly, just recognizing Prosper.

"My father is dead," he said. "The telegram reached the house early this morning. He died suddenly last night. I must go home at once."

Pauline started up. "Your father?" she stammered.

He took her hand. "Yes; I must get the nine o'clock train, so I have no time to lose." Then he turned to Prosper. "You will have to spare me for a few days."

"I am sorry for the reason," Prosper said, gravely, "but I understand, Langmuir."

The two shook hands, and Hugh led Pauline to the hall with him.

"Write to me," she said.

"Yes, I will write at once. I could not go without seeing you. Make my apologies to Miss Berryan. I can't stop another instant. Good-by, my dear, my own."

He pressed her to him, laid his lips on hers in a long kiss, and then hurried away. She returned to the parlor, where Miss Berryan was closing the piano.

"You will stay here while he is gone?" Miss Berryan said.

"If you will let me," Pauline answered. The news had come so suddenly that she was too stunned to comprehend it. She only felt lonely and desolate as the thought of Hugh borne away from her side swept over her.

"I will go up to my room, I think," she said. "Good-night, Mr. Prosper."

With that, she quitted him, but Miss Berryan went with her to her bedroom door. Nearly all that night, Pauline lay motionless, awake, con-

fused by the memories of the evening's events. She heard Jennie's witch-like laughter running through the few words Hugh had spoken. Faces flitted before her, and while she tried to recognize features that seemed familiar they changed to those of imps and monsters. She saw her mother, then Mrs. Fisher. She heard her father calling her, and his voice was drowned by the marionette's funeral march, which melted into the old gavotte her mother had been wont to play. She was with Hugh in the flat, and the garrulous woman was talking to them. Past, present, and future were mingled in dire confusion, until at last the chaos in her brain became intolerable. She tried to pray, only to find herself recalling poetry she had learned in her childhood, and it was when she was exhausted by the maddening riot of thoughts that her tense limbs grew lax and her weary eyes closed in blessed sleep.

XVI.

HULLTON, *January* 29, 188-.

MY DEAR PAULINE: —

Since I reached here, I have had so many things to attend to that I have not had a minute to myself until now. I have persuaded my poor mother to go to bed only by promising that I would watch by my father, and this letter is written in the room in which he lies. She cannot bear that he should be left alone; she cannot realize that he is dead. She found him in his study, sitting by his table, his head resting against the high back of the chair, and she thought he was asleep. The shock to her was terrible, and it has aged her in a night. I cannot speak to her yet about the future, but of course it is to me that she must look for protection and support. She has very little money, and there is my sister to be thought of, too. My brother will do what he can, but he is only a boy, and I am glad that I am in a position to be of some help to them all. We cannot be married, you and I, until my brother begins to earn his own living, but he and my sister are far too proud to depend on me one minute longer than they must. She will teach, I have no doubt, and he will get some-

thing to do as soon as he can. All this will take time, and I am not man enough to say that I do not feel half crushed under the sudden weight of responsibility that has dropped upon my shoulders. I dare speak my heart out to you, but I wonder if you will think me disloyal to my good father, if I say that all the way here in the cars I kept thinking of you, not of him. I knew that it was my duty to take care of my mother and my sister, and I knew what that meant. I love them and I loved my father, but you are first and dearest, and I must put you away from me — how long, God knows. Oh, Pauline, I was nearly mad with joy before this news came. I went up town with Mr. Prosper, and he was kinder than I had any reason to hope he would be. He said he would raise my salary to fifteen hundred; he said it might be twice that in a year, and he promised that if I proved myself useful to him he would give me a share in the business. I raced home to tell you, and you were not there. Instead, there was that dispatch. It all flashed upon me in a minute, the meaning of it, the consequences, and still you were not there to speak one word of comfort. You seemed to be so far away; you seemed to be dead, too, and I went into your room, lay down on your bed, hid my face in your pillow, and cried like a child. Then I remembered that you still were with me, and I forgot my father. I was out of the house before I thought of him. When I came to where you were, you were farther away than

ever. There was somebody playing the piano, the room was so bright and warm, and there you sat as though you had forgotten me. Of course you had not; you did not know — how could you? But you were in another world, and I wanted to snatch you up and carry you away with me — somewhere — away from friends, family, everybody. Pauline, you don't dream of what you are to me. I can't tell you. Perhaps you would not understand, but if I lose you — there, I can't write that — can't think of it. I have no right to say these things, to think them, with my dead father lying beside me, and my mother in the room above me, mourning for him. Love me as she loved him. Trust me, believe in me, and when I am gone feel as she does, that your own life has gone, too.

I must stop. My hand is trembling so I can hardly hold my pen. Send me two lines, and say that you love me, you will wait for me. Comfort me, Pauline. I am stretching out my arms to you now. If they could only clasp you and hold you to my heart forever! There is no one but you. Think what you will. I wish my father was in his grave, and I was with you again. And now I can put in no words what I feel that I must be to you. I never wrote you a letter before. It is a mockery to say that I love you and that I am your own HUGH.

XVII.

"JANE, you've been crying. Your eyes look like boiled gooseberries."

"I know it, Gilbert, and you would have cried, too."

"Yes, I am often moved to tears. What on earth is the matter? Has Jennie been on another rampage?"

"Oh no, no. Don't speak so harshly of the child. She is very penitent, and she begged Pauline's pardon and mine, and she will beg yours, too, and I will send for her at once."

Miss Berryan's hand went towards the bell, but Prosper caught her arm, hastily.

"I don't want any apologies," he said. "If she behaves herself in the future, that will be apology enough. I merely came for those papers which I left here day before yesterday."

He looked up quickly then, as a step sounded along the hall, and the nurse passed the library door. Miss Berryan took the papers from the table drawer, tying them neatly with a piece of pink tape, and handed them to him, saying, —

"Please stay to dinner with me, Gilbert. It is nearly six o'clock, and I sha'n't eat a mouthful if I am all alone."

"What have you done with Miss Valrey?" he asked.

"Oh dear," she answered with a great sigh, "this afternoon I drove with her over to her house to get some things she needed, for she came thinking she would stay only one night; and she was worried, too, for she had forgotten to lock her bedroom door; and sure enough, that awful boy that lives there had been in the room, and all the cologne I gave her was gone and there was some nasty stuff in the bottle, and when she opened her bureau drawer she found that he had sprinkled snuff through her underclothing."

Prosper started up from the sofa with an inarticulate exclamation, which was nothing more or less than a smothered oath. He could not "refresh himself with the trill of a curse;" habit was too heavy for that, for although he swore freely enough among men, a petticoat always kept him from profanity.

"I 'd like to wring that cub's neck," he said.

"Oh, so should I," chimed in Miss Berryan; "that is, I would like to spank him, only he is much too large; and I saw him, and I told him he was a little sneak, and he ran his tongue out at me, and mimicked me, and truly, Gilbert, I nearly slapped his face."

"And Miss Valrey?" Gilbert asked, breathlessly.

"Poor Pauline, she just smiled, or tried to, and said it was no matter, and she would n't be in that

house long; but then the postman came, and he had a letter for her, a long letter from her lover, and she sat down on the edge of the bed to read it. First she grew white and caught her breath, then she turned scarlet, and her hand shook so that the letter trembled like a leaf. After that, she grew paler and paler, and I was afraid she would faint, and suddenly she gave a little moan — Why, Gilbert, what ails you?"

"Nothing, nothing. Go on. And then— Oh, the poor girl!"

"Then she put her face down on the pillow and cried, and I cried, too, Gilbert; I could not help it. Finally, she told me a little about it: how Mr. Langmuir's people were poor, and he must take care of his mother and sister, and it was useless to think of marriage. Suddenly, she got up and went to her desk and took out a piece of paper. It was a list he and she had made of the things they meant to buy to begin housekeeping with, and she tore it up like a mad woman; and she smiled and looked so strange that I was frightened, and then she threw herself on the bed, but she did not cry any more. Oh, Gilbert, it was just sheer despair, and it nearly broke my heart, and I could not comfort her."

"Where is she?" said Gilbert, hoarsely.

"There in that house, for she said she must stay there and wait for Hugh, and she had not been there when he needed her most, but he would find her waiting for him. And she wrote

a telegram and begged me to send it to him, and I did, and I cried all the way home in the brougham, so I suppose I am a sight to behold, but I can't help it, Gilbert. If you had seen her, you would not think I was such a fool."

This last word was brought out sharply, for Miss Berryan's voice was trembling, and as she concluded she wiped tears from her eyes.

"I don't think you are a fool, Jane," Gilbert said, gently. "I should think you were something worse, if you did not cry."

His tenderness broke his sister down completely, and he put his arm around her, and patted her shoulder.

"There, Jane, we must bring the poor girl here and cheer her up. She is fond of you, and it is for you to give her some courage. I am sorry to hear that Langmuir is in such trouble, and I wish they could be married." He stopped short, took his arm from his sister's waist, and turned aside. He knew he was lying, and he hated a lie.

Jennie tripped down-stairs, and paused on the threshold of the library, horror-stricken to find one cousin in tears, the other scowling heavily. At her old home, she had often seen her mother weep, heard her father speak harsh words; this, she felt, was no such common domestic broil. Prosper's back was to the door and he did not know she had entered the room, but when she slipped her hand in his he turned about as though he had been stung.

"Oh, Jennie, is that you?"

"Cousin Gilbert, you forgive me for being so bad, don't you?"

The appealing accent went to his heart. He clasped her hand; then, seating himself, drew her on his knee.

"Jennie, we 're all bad sometimes, and we all ought to be sorry and say so, as you do. Now we 'll kiss and be friends again, little girl."

She twined her arms about his neck, and he hid his hot face in her soft yellow hair. He dreaded to meet her baby eyes; they read his soul, he thought. She glided out of his embrace and went to Miss Berryan.

"I have n't done anything to make you cry, have I, Cousin Jane?" she said, with entreaty.

"No, no, dear, but poor Miss Valrey is in trouble, and when she comes to-morrow you must be very good to her, for she is unhappy."

"Is it about Mr. Hugh Langmuir?" Jennie asked.

"Goodness, where did you hear of him?" said Miss Berryan, in blank amazement.

"Oh, I don't know. He is poor, and he wants to marry her, and Cousin Gilbert is helping him; but he is n't dead, is he?"

"No," Prosper answered. Then he went into the next room, smiling in stupefied amazement, and muttering under his breath, "She 's a witch, she knows everything. Why, it is simply astounding. She 's in league with the very devil himself."

Smiling oddly, his lips moving in whispered talk, he strayed about until Jennie kissed him good-night and went up to the nursery. He stayed to dinner with his sister; they were utterly miserable, and spent a long, silent, dreary evening, exchanging a few words now and then, but for the most part absorbed in their own thoughts. When at ten o'clock he rose wearily, he said, —

"Jane, it is perfectly absurd for you to be living here and for me to be living in a hotel. You asked me once to join households with you, and next winter I 'll take up my quarters here, if you would like to have me, and if nothing happens to prevent."

"Indeed I would like to have you," she returned, heartily. "It is lonesome for me sometimes."

He stooped and kissed her, the rare caress bringing a blush to both their faces.

"It is lonesome for me, too, sometimes," he said.

After he was gone, she looked towards the door thoughtfully. "Poor old Gilbert," she said, with a smile and a sigh. "Poor old Gilbert."

She met Pauline the next day with outstretched arms, and while the lessons were in progress she glanced often to the pale, sad teacher. Jennie was in a lackadaisical frame of mind, and stumbled through her French reading in a wretched fashion. She had not studied diligently, but she was too vain to confess that. When Pauline chided her, she said, —

"I can't help it, Mademoiselle. My eyes hurt me so yesterday that I could n't read."

"If your eyes hurt you, then you must stop using them for a while," Pauline said. A happy thought sped into Jennie's cunning brain. She saw a way of getting rid of this person whom her cousins were so fond of. If there were no lessons, there would be no teacher. She was at once jealous and crafty. Before Mademoiselle Valrey appeared on the scene, Cousin Jane and Cousin Gilbert had paid far more attention to Jennie, and now Jennie saw a way by which Mademoiselle Valrey might be prevented from coming to the beautiful brown stone house so often. She heaved a great sigh.

"My eyes sort of ache," she said, "and when I read they ache worse, and when I try to draw they ache worse yet."

"Oh dear me," cried Miss Berryan, in anxiety, "I must have the doctor look at your eyes, then, for I would not have your sight injured, and it is better to be ignorant than blind; so shut up your books at once, Jennie, and this afternoon I will take you to Doctor Moran, but I dare say it is nothing, only you have taxed your eyes too much. Still, you don't use them in the evening, do you?"

"Sometimes," said Jennie, with a downcast face. "And if I have an interesting story I can't stop just because it grows dark, and then I read early in the morning" —

"Well, you must not do that any more," said

Miss Berryan sharply. "We will see what the doctor has to say. Perhaps he will put a pair of blue spectacles on you," she added, with a touch of malice, for she knew her adopted daughter's weakness where personal appearance was concerned.

Jennie's face grew very solemn at this suggestion. Horror of horrors! A pair of spectacles, and blue ones at that! However, if she had got herself into a scrape, she could get herself out of it again; she had sublime faith in her own resources.

That very afternoon Miss Berryan took her to Doctor Moran, who examined her eyes carefully, and could find nothing the matter with them, but he advised rest, if they hurt her; she had better leave books alone for six months. He pinched her cheeks good-humoredly, and asked her if she wanted to be a learned woman. Now comedy acting comes by nature or not at all, and Jennie could no more help playing her part well than she could help breathing. She caught the accent of unbelief in his voice, and she said piteously, —

"But my eyes do hurt me."

Alas for her! The doctor examined them more carefully, and gave her a pair of blue spectacles to wear. She took them meekly, but the shrewd doctor saw the droop of her mouth and smiled to himself. He thought it would not be long before she would rather study her lessons than wear those hideous goggles. Men of his profession get

pretty well acquainted with the kinks in feminine natures.

With her spectacles on her nose, Jennie went out to the waiting brougham. The coachman glanced at her, and his immobile countenance turned red in the effort he made not to smile. Jennie saw it. She was subdued, but still triumphant, for there were to be no more lessons for six months, and Mademoiselle Valrey would have no excuse for coming to the house regularly and bewitching everybody. Miss Berryan thought of Pauline, too, and she pondered the question how she could be of any real help to her. Give her money she could not, and yet help her in some way she felt that she must, now more than ever. She could only resolve to ask Gilbert's counsel, and accordingly she laid the case before him in a letter which straightway brought him to the house.

"What's all this about Jennie's eyes?" he said, brusquely, as he entered the library on the next evening. "It's bosh. She is up to some mischief. She wants to shirk her lessons, and you are foolish to abet her, Jane."

Miss Berryan defended Jennie stoutly, as usual, and quoted the doctor, concluding with, —

"And it is better to run no risk, for it is awful to have anything wrong with one's sight."

"Wrong with one's grandmother!" he exclaimed. "Jennie could hoodwink a college full of oculists. However," he added, more mildly,

"the fiat has gone forth. She is not to touch a book for a while, and her various teachers are to be dismissed. If you want to be of service to Miss Valrey, there is only one thing you can do: install her here as your companion, and pay her well."

"Yes, I have thought of that," said Miss Berryan, dubiously, "but I am afraid she won't come."

"Why won't she? That house she lives in is a menagerie full of brutes. She is perfectly wretched there."

"Ah, but Mr. Langmuir!"

"Well, and what of Mr. Langmuir? He can't marry her now; he has his mother and sisters and aunts to take care of, and if he has any decent feeling in him he will be glad to put Miss Valrey in a comfortable home, rather than keep her in that Dutch bear garden. You make the proposition, at any rate, Jane. Do it delicately, and I guess you will find it taken in no bad part. And see here, if Jennie must learn French, let Miss Valrey teach her by talking, not by book, just as a French young one learns the lingo. Oh, bah, you can manage it, if you have any gumption."

Miss Berryan thought she did have gumption. She talked the plan over with her brother, who forgot himself, and advocated it so warmly that she did not quite like to look at his excited face. There was an element of danger in bringing Pauline to the house, and in the spinster's heart worldly wisdom and sentimentality struggled for

mastery. There was some selfishness at the bottom of her wish to have Pauline with her, for she found the girl's society agreeable, and whatever was agreeable, Jane Berryan never dispensed with if she could help it.

XVIII.

A DULL rain was bringing the February day to a close as Hugh walked towards Harloe Row. Still he did not quicken his pace; he half dreaded to reach the house; perhaps she was not there, perhaps she was in that other house, where everything was soft to the touch, grateful to the eye, sweet to the nostril; where there was nothing to do but dream by an open fire and listen to fantastic music, made to tickle an ear surfeited with excess of cloying melody. Yes, perhaps, she was there, lying back in a cushioned chair, her hands idle — those white hands! He hungered for the touch of them; after all, they were his. He drew near the house, looked up to her window, and his heart gave a great throb, for he saw a gleam of light filtering through the closed shutter. She was there; she was waiting for him. And yet it was slowly that he entered and mounted the stairs, for these last few days had taken all the spring out of his step, the lightness out of his heart. The hard, arid, endless path of duty stretched away before his eyes, and to turn aside from it was impossible. At home he had been forced to show a brave face, but he knew too well what earning a living meant to put much faith in the

assurances of his brother and sister that they would not look long to him for food and raiment. They were mere boy and girl, young, untaught, and unless fortune's wheel took a most amazing turn they must serve an apprenticeship before they could stand on their own feet, much less hold out a helping hand to their mother. And this sudden blow had struck that mother down to the earth. She appealed so strongly to Hugh's generosity and pity, that, whatever it might cost him, he would care for her first, though she was no longer nearest and dearest to him of all women. No wonder he went slowly up the stairs, no wonder he hesitated at Pauline's door. He tapped softly and spoke to her. All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his heart as he heard her cry out his name.

"Hugh!" and she flung open the door and clung to him as though she would never let him leave her again.

"Oh, that cruel letter you sent me," she moaned. "You thought I was not true to you — how could you, how could you?"

"Because I was mad, Pauline, because I wanted you, and because I must see success crumble to ashes in my hand. Wait, wait, wait! That is our word, that is our destiny. And I have no patience. I can't bear to think of going on in this way, living here in this cursed house, or in another no better, subjected to petty taunts and contemptible annoyance — we two, when we might

be together and with the door of our home between us and all the world. Pauline, there is no manhood left in me; I am weak as a woman; I can only wring my hands and cry out against fate."

"Do more than that," she said, and her voice shook with passion, too. "Take me away from here. Let us go, leave everybody. We must. Hugh, do you hear me? Something will happen, something will keep us apart, unless you take me now."

Her body trembled and her very excitement soothed him.

"My darling, I have frightened you; you don't know what you are saying. I am so wretched that I make mountains out of mole-hills. Instead of whining in this way, I ought to look on the bright side of it — and there is a bright side. If the heavens don't fall, in a year from now I shall be able to keep my people at home and still have my wife to myself, though you and I would have to live very quietly. Perhaps we could find a place in the suburbs — you would go there, would n't you?"

"Yes, Hugh," she answered, hopelessly.

"Only we can't begin housekeeping this spring; may be in the fall" —

She gave a bitter little laugh.

"Oh, may be," she echoed. "There, Hugh," she added, "go get off this wet coat; it is almost time for dinner." She passed her hand over his

cheek. "You won't have time to shave, though your face is dreadfully bristly. My poor, dear boy! We do get very desperate, don't we? And I am no comfort to you; I just heap up the misery as high as I can, instead of trying to lighten the burden you have to bear. And you are sorrowful and sick at heart, and you come home to me and I am reproachful and cross — but it is your fault. I must be sad when you are; I must be what you are, you have made me love you so."

She pushed him away from her, bade him go, and then drew him back to her again.

"You have been gone so long — I can't bear you out of my sight," she said. "Now go, go, Hugh."

Laughing, he obeyed her; she had comforted him indeed, but when she entered her own room, closing the door carefully, she looked at her face in the little mirror. As she looked, the smile and the flush faded out of it; her reflected face confronted her, pale, stern, almost tragic. Her lips moved.

"I love him; I will never leave him, never," she whispered, then glanced towards the door fearfully, as though she thought some one might hear her.

Hugh was forced to receive even Mrs. Fisher's condolences that night, and her magnanimity, the pressure of her clammy hand, made him wince.

"This has told on you," said Mr. Kane to him, in a low tone.

It had told on him. His face was like a piece of marble, white and fixed. Scorn himself as he would, the fact remained: he mourned not for his dead father, but for the wife who was kept from him by that father's grave.

"There is one lucky thing," he said, grimly, to Pauline when they were alone together after dinner; "we did not rent the flat or buy any furniture. I wish we had been married, though. Then I could take care of you first with a clear conscience."

"Don't speak in that way, Hugh," she returned. "You will only be sorry afterward. You don't mean it. You are cast down now, but in a few weeks you will be yourself again."

"We play see-saw," said he, breaking into a little laugh. "First I reprove you for looking on the gloomy side, and then you reprove me. I am tired out and that is the truth. There was so much to be done at home, and so little time to do it in, and I could not sleep, and altogether I am way down in the depths."

She forbore to speak to him then about her loss of a pupil, but while she talked to him a note lay hidden in her pocket. It was from Miss Berryan, to the effect that Jennie could receive no more lessons at present, and that meant much to Pauline. She was well paid for her services at the school, but she needed all the money she could earn; it is no vast sum that a teacher gets at best, and Pauline, being a woman and young, could not

hope to make a third of what her father had earned. Miss Berryan's note was carefully written, and there was a vague mystery in it which Pauline could not fathom, a hint at something pleasant and promising. She did not show the note to Hugh until the next day, and he remarked that it never rained but it poured, as he re-folded the missive and slipped it into the envelope.

"What do you suppose she means by saying this may not be so unfortunate as it looks?" Pauline asked, taking the note out and reading it again.

"Why, I suppose it means that the child's sight is not seriously impaired. What else could it mean? Or else it means that it is not so unfortunate for me, because you will not have a hiding-place any longer. You were always there. Not that I blame you," he added, hastily, catching sight of her grieved face, "only I am a selfish clod and want you with me. Do you propose to look up another private pupil?"

"Yes," she answered, slowly. "And I think I had better tell you, Hugh, that Madame Kenyon finds a good deal of fault with me, and the other day she was really so disagreeable that I came near saying that she could fill my place."

"Oh, don't," cried Hugh. "What ails the woman?"

"Perhaps it is true that I am a little absent-minded and don't keep the girls to work properly," said Pauline. "I do my best, but one of

the teachers told me that Madame had a cousin who could teach the rudiments of French, and I suspect that my place is wanted. Of course, anybody almost can teach what I do."

"Humph, the cousin is at the bottom of it," said Hugh. "Well, you can get private pupils, or you can find another school. Don't worry about that. You have a little fortune, remember, for a rainy day."

"It will be a rainy day indeed, when I touch that money," Pauline said, with sudden energy. "No, I will secure private pupils at once, with Miss Berryan's help, and then when Madame finds fault I shall be able to give myself the pleasure of bidding her adieu."

The idea of this triumph elated Pauline. Madam was as strict with her teachers as with her pupils, and she had never forgiven Pauline for not telling of her engagement. There was but one way to live in peace with the head of the great refining establishment, and that was to treat her as though she were a queen to be admired and looked up to, and a mother confessor who had a right to know everything. Pauline had neither flattered her nor confided in her; she had been distant and dignified; and while she had striven to do her duty, she had fallen short in very truth. She had hurried through a lesson, sometimes, so that she should be at Miss Berryan's at the luncheon hour; she had spent nights at Miss Berryan's, and been late on those morn-

ings at the school. That she was a trifle preoccupied once in a while was not strange, and Madam Kenyon had reason for mentioning these things. Discipline must be maintained, though a father dies, friends are overkind, and a lover's words linger in the heart and drive out thoughts of verbs and participles.

"Don't do anything in haste," said Hugh, gravely. "Spring is coming, and you need not bid Madam Kenyon adieu until the school closes."

They were in the dingy dining-room after dinner, and alone. Mrs. Terry kept out of their way as much as she could, but coal cost money, and her interest in the lovers was not great enough to lead her into the extravagance of heating her own bed-chamber, so that she could sit there and leave her boarders in possession of the entire parlor floor. When she entered, Pauline rose.

"There, now, I have driven you off," said Mrs. Terry, deeply hurt.

"If you knew how tired I was you would not say that," Pauline returned. "I am going to bed. Good-night."

Hugh looked for the mute invitation to follow her to the dark hall for a good-night kiss, but she did not give it, and he did not follow her. She was tired indeed. There had been examinations in the school that day, and her French class had not scored a success. Her heart was not in the work, and she knew it. But she did not go to bed at once; she wrote this note: —

DEAR MISS BERRYAN: —

I have not answered your note before, because it seemed at first as though no answer was necessary. Now, however, I am going to ask you to help me find private pupils. I shall not stay with Madame Kenyon after this year, and I must set about securing pupils at once, in French and drawing. I am very sorry to lose Jennie. It was a pleasure to teach her, and it was a pleasure to have a reason for coming often to your house. The lessons there were bright spots in my life.

When she had written this much, she paused and bit the top of her pen-holder reflectively. The minutes sped by. She put the pen down mechanically, and, cold as the room was, she sat thinking. She felt shut out of paradise. No more would she be in Miss Berryan's house for a few delicious hours each week. She would go there once in a while, but not as before, and she had learned to look forward eagerly to the Saturday morning lesson, the luncheon that followed, and then the drive. All that had slipped into the past, and she dwelt on it regretfully. So completely lost was she in these reflections that she did not hear Hugh come up-stairs, and she started when he tapped at her door.

"Pauline," — his voice was stern, — "why don't you go to bed or come down-stairs where it is warm? You will catch your death of cold sitting in that barn of a room."

"I had a few exercises to correct, Hugh," she stammered.

"Then correct them in the dining-room."

"Oh, I am all through now."

She took her pen and brought her note to a hasty conclusion, but the lie she had told weighed heavy on her conscience.

XIX.

When Miss Berryan received Pauline's doleful note, she murmured, "Poor dear," and ordered the brougham and drove at once to Madam Kenyon's, where she was forced to wait full fifteen minutes before the schoolmistress swept into the room, holding out both her hands to her old pupil.

"So sorry to have kept you waiting, dear Miss Berryan, but my time is not always at my own disposal, and I have been compelled to spend a very disagreeable quarter of an hour in reprimanding, or perhaps I should say advising, one of my teachers; and she did not feel half so hurt as I, for I have great sympathy for her, but one cannot manage a school by sympathy, unfortunately."

Here Madam Kenyon paused; she knew her guest had not come to pay an idle call; she saw a motive fluttering in her very bonnet-strings. And by whatever devious routes Miss Berryan might take her leave of a subject, she approached it by the shortest possible cut, often jumping over the highest conversational fence to reach the desired point. Indeed, she was always so wrapped up in her own affairs that she paid scant attention to those of others. Therefore, she smiled vaguely at Madam Kenyon, and said,—

"I called to ask you what you would think of me if I took Miss Valrey from you."

Madam caught her breath, but, checking an impulse to speak hastily, she begged Miss Berryan to explain.

"Well, Jennie — you know who Jennie is; the little girl I have adopted? — her eyes have troubled her, and she can't study, but I don't like to have her lose her time, and she must be employed in some way, for habits of idleness and her indiscriminate reading are very bad. Why, you would hardly believe it, but since she can't read herself, she gets the nurse or the housemaid to read aloud to her, and she wants to know what is in the newspapers, and, above all, she will hear if there has been a murder, and I was really shocked to find that she has always read everything in the papers, and I don't need to tell you that papers are dreadful; nothing but scandal and divorces, and Jennie has read them all. Now, I have been thinking that it would be well to take Miss Valrey into my house, partly on Jennie's account, — for she could read French to her, and speak a little, too, — and partly on my own. She is so sweet that I have really grown attached to her, and I do get lonesome sometimes, and a companion would be pleasant, though one always thinks a companion must be a fussy old woman, which Miss Valrey is not."

Madam surveyed her guest leisurely, and Miss Berryan's anxious expression changed to a shrewd one.

"If it would be a serious loss to you to have Miss Valrey leave at once" — she began, but Madam waved her hand majestically. She understood; Miss Berryan was ready to buy a substitute; Miss Berryan had come to believe that one could buy pretty much everything in this world.

"I could spare Miss Valrey," said Madam, dryly. "I could fill her place without trouble, and it would be a comfort to see the girl in a house like yours. I feel some responsibility about her, on her father's account, and it is quite impossible that she should go on living as she does, alone. You know she is engaged to be married, and while I have every reason to think well of her and of the person she is to marry, I do not approve at all of their living in the same house — and such a place as it is! She is young, and she is attractive, and she is poor."

Madam looked significant as she said this, and Miss Berryan smoothed her gloves.

"Then I am at liberty to make her an offer," she said, raising her eyes quickly to the other's face.

"As soon as you please — to-day, if you like. And now I must ask you to excuse me. I have a pupil waiting to see me."

Miss Berryan went out to her brougham, but she had not been driven far before she saw Pauline hurrying along the sidewalk. It was the work of a minute to stop the carriage and take the girl in. Pauline's eyes showed traces of tears, which

welled up slowly when Miss Berryan asked her tenderly what had happened.

"Oh, I am in disgrace; I have vexed Madame, and she spoke to me — brutally. Yes," cried Pauline, brushing the tears away, "and I was not meek; I told her she was unjust, I told her the truth, too, and then" —

"It is all right now," broke in Miss Berryan. "I saw Madam, and I asked her if I could take you to live with me" —

"Live with you?"

"Yes, on Jennie's account, I said, but it was not that alone, for I am fond of you, my dear, and you cheer me up, and I need somebody; and I will give you whatever you were getting, and there would be no board, and you need not stay in that horrid house in the East River, as Gilbert calls it; and you will come, Pauline, won't you? I know you would be happy."

Miss Berryan pleaded like a lover at the feet of his mistress, clasping Pauline's hand, and depicting the future in radiant hues. They would have to take care of Jennie, of course, but they could drive out together, and since Pauline would not go to theatres, there were concerts, — people in deep mourning went to concerts and even to theatres, though a crape veil certainly did look odd there, — and the evenings would not be so long and dreary."

"Why, I have to go to bed because I have nobody to talk to and nothing to do," cried Miss

Berryan. "'T is n't as though I had lived always in New York, and had heaps of intimate friends. I pay calls, and people call on me, but there is nobody to run in, as there used to be in Troy, and sometimes I think I shall have to get married just for a change, but I would be sorry afterwards; and you can't be married yet, Pauline, dear, and I am sorry, too, but you would be far better off with me. And then it is not proper for you to live alone there in that house, Mr. Langmuir being there too" —

"Why not?" asked Pauline.

"Oh, because it is n't. There is no use trying to reason it all out, and the minute a woman begins to reason out such things, and act accordingly, she is talked about always, and it does not matter whether it is true or not, though most people who get themselves talked about deserve it, for all they cry out against gossip and slander. Gossip is generally the truth. Nobody will own up to it, for we all get gossiped about sooner or later, and it is more comfortable to begin at once and say it is a shame how scandal-mongers talk, and then, when it comes our turn, why, we can go right on complaining of our neighbors' wicked tongues."

"There is no one to gossip about me," Pauline said, with a little laugh. "I am not afraid of that; I would not go somewhere else to live because of possible slander, but I should like to live with you, because life in your house is pleasant, because I am fond of you, because it would be easy

and agreeable to fill the position you offer — oh, there are a thousand reasons why I am ready to come, but " —

"Oh, bother the buts of it!" cried Miss Berryan. "I know what you are going to say; you can't bear to leave Mr. Langmuir."

Pauline's eyes dilated. "It is not that entirely; it is that you are asking me to come because you are sorry for me."

"Sorry for you? Yes; but a good deal sorrier for myself. We are all selfish, and it is only when our selfishness happens to benefit somebody else that we call it generosity; and I want you to come and live with me, because I am dead tired of living by myself. Why, I have been on the lookout for a companion for ever so long; not a horrid, fussy old woman, but a real companion. Oh, there is no use talking, Pauline; I want you, and I mean to have you."

Miss Berryan's teeth came together with a click, and she put her arm around Pauline, who had shrunk back in her corner of the carriage trembling a little from excitement. It was such an easy way out of difficulties and disagreeable problems; it was to speak one word, and be transported from the little house in Harloe Row, where life was growing every day more intolerable, to what seemed a palace in comparison. When she thought of Hugh, however, she hesitated to speak that word, not so much because she could not bear to be parted from him as because she feared he

would upbraid her, call her heartless, selfish, and cruel. Still they could not be married now; they might have to wait years; and meanwhile, since she must earn her living, why should she not earn it in the easiest and pleasantest fashion? She bit her lip nervously, as she pondered the pros and cons of the question.

"I want to come," she murmured.

"Then you will come," said Miss Berryan, quietly. "You talk it all over with Mr. Langmuir. Tell him Madam is willing, and you might tell him, too, that Madam thinks you ought not to stay in the same house with him."

"Did she say that?" asked Pauline, defiance in her tone.

"Not in so many words, but she hinted at it, and I agree with her; and I had a friend in Troy who became acquainted with a gentleman in a boarding-house, and they fell in love, and when they were engaged he went to another place to board, and everybody thought it was so delicate of him."

"I think it was very stupid," said Pauline, frankly, smiling and coloring. "There is such a good chance to learn all about each other's little ways in a boarding-house. Why, I know exactly what Hugh likes to eat, and how it must be cooked."

"A woman finds out what her husband likes to eat, and how it must be cooked, soon enough," said Miss Berryan, drolly. "My father was very par-

ticular about his dinner, and I used to think that I would marry a man who did n't care whether the beef was overdone or not, but I have n't found him yet, and perhaps I never shall. But it is men who keep things straight, and I believe if I was not always afraid Gilbert might drop in I would dine half the time on mutton chops and potatoes, though I must say I like good things myself, only I get so tired of being asked what I will have that sometimes I fancy it would be a relief to board; but the cook I have now gives me what she pleases, and I find fault, which is always pleasant and quite mannish, and men do know what is pleasant better than women."

"Does your brother know of your plan for me?" Pauline asked, languidly, and studying a passing bonnet as she put the question. It was not a very fine bonnet, either, for by this time the carriage had left the realm of costly bonnets, and was approaching the purlieus, where the corner of a woolen shawl often protected a tousled head from the winter blast.

"Yes, he knows and approves," answered Miss Berryan, curtly.

"I am glad he approves," said Pauline. "I am just the least bit in the world afraid of him. He might be very terrible."

"He might be, but he never is, and the reason why he looks so is because he lives by himself and among men; and he has got into a harsh way of talking that he does n't mean, for he really is

very soft at heart, and sometimes he is as gentle as a man can be, and then I am really in love with him — not but what I always love him, poor fellow."

"And why 'poor fellow'?"

"Oh, I don't know, but I am sort of sorry for him; he does n't seem to get much fun out of life, and I guess he and I would both be better off if we were married and had a lot of children to worry us; and I think it is your duty to come and live with me, Pauline."

"And worry you?" she asked, lightly, and by way of reply the spinster squeezed her hand in rapture.

Pauline alighted at Mrs. Terry's presently, and went up to her room, elated by the thought that perhaps she need not mount those narrow stairs often in the future. Her heart smote her, though, as she passed Hugh's door and remembered how he would miss her presence in the house. She wondered if he would let her leave; she could not fancy what he would say to the plan, and she held an imaginary conversation with him while she was putting away her hat and jacket and smoothing out her gloves. He was protesting against the scheme, she was presenting it in the best light, and she set up straw men which she could knock down at a blow. When she heard him come up-stairs, she went out to him and laid her arms around his neck, not only receiving his caresses, but responding to them with unwonted lack of shyness.

"What is it, Pauline?" he asked, for a lover's suspicions are quickly aroused, and Hugh was no dull clod to be fooled into believing that a girl's change of demeanor was the mere outcome of a senseless impulse.

"I am going to leave you," she whispered, deserting her mapped-out line of diplomatic action in a trice.

"Leave me, sweetheart! Where are you going?"

"To Miss Berryan's."

"I might have known that, the wily, artful spinster that she is. She is a spider, and catches a poor little fly like you in her web. What is it now? A dinner, a festival, a concert? When will you be back?"

"Never, Hugh."

His hold on her tightened. "She may be a spider, but then I shall be a housekeeper with a long broom, and I will sweep her cobwebs away fast enough, and rescue you."

He kissed her cheeks, her brow, and her mouth, but she struggled out of his arms.

"I am telling you all wrong," she said, in despair. "I did not mean to. I was going to be so clever, and I am so stupid."

"Hush," he said. They both listened and heard Mr. Fisher's feet laboring heavily on the stairs. Then he caught her to him again. "I don't know what it is you think you are telling me in so stupid a way, but I don't want you to be clever with me, only honest, Pauline."

Hugh spoke half in reproach, half in tenderness. Some dim premonition of trouble had suddenly gathered in his brain, and as Mr. Fisher was almost upon them he released Pauline and sought his own room. He could hear her moving about, and by and by she began to hum a tune softly, and he laid his ear against the wall to listen. She gained confidence; she sang out boldly a cradle song that she had heard in her childhood.

"'Enfant, si tu dors,
Les anges alors
T'apporteront mille choses:
Des petits oiseaux,
Des petits agneaux,
Des lis, des lilas, des roses;
Puis, des lapins blancs
Avec des ribans
Pour traîner loin ta voiture.
Ils te donneront
Tout ce qu'ils auront,
Et des baisers, je t'assure!'"

Hugh smiled absently, for her voice sounded sweet in his ears, but his face darkened as he caught the full import of the words. And so angels were to bring her all manner of dainty delights, were they? Angels were to give her everything, and kisses to boot? Angels, forsooth! The giver of good things was a stout spinster, with a yet stouter pocket-book. Hugh brushed his hair in a rage, and kicked off his heavy boots in a fury. No angels should give her the lilies and lilacs and roses of the world. If he could not give them to

her, then she should share his crust and have nothing else. She was his; she belonged to him; and he cursed the day that had seen her enter the house of a rich woman. She had changed since then; she no longer preached absurd but delicious sermons to him about contentment, and doing one's duty well and leaving the rest to God. No, she had become ambitious and worldly. She had bitten into the fatal apple and found it toothsome.

He left his room, sending the door to behind him with an angry slam that was followed by a sudden crash, as though something had fallen. Mr. Fisher burst out of his room then, followed by his wife, and they both began to talk at once, but Mr. Fisher bade his wife shut up, and addressed Hugh.

"What the devil are you doing, banging doors around like this?" he said. "You jarred the whole house, and you 've been the means of smashing my shaving-glass. Yes, sir, the nail jumped clean out of the wall, and down came the glass; and if you think I am going to put up with your damn tantrums, you 're sold, I can tell you."

"I 'll get you another shaving-glass," said Hugh, "if you hold your impertinent tongue."

"Hold my tongue, is it? I 'll say what I like, and if you don't want to hear me you can clear out."

"If anybody clears out it will be you!" cried Hugh.

"Humph! I guess as long as I pay my board I will stay, and I don't care a cuss for a dozen

young fellows who think they own the earth because they have been taken up by some fool of a swell."

Hugh laughed contemptuously and maddened Mr. Fisher.

"Oh, you can grin," he said, "but I can tell you, sir, you can't have your own way in this house any longer, and I understand you like a book. It is time you set up housekeeping, and you 'd better marry that girl instead of sneaking into her room, if you mean to marry her"—

Hugh sprang on him and bore the big German down to the floor, then put one knee on his breast and choked him. Mrs. Fisher screamed for help. Pauline ran out of her room just as Mrs. Terry and Mr. Kane dashed up the stairs.

"He is killing him," cried Mrs. Fisher, in agony.

"Hugh," said Pauline, laying her hand on his shoulder.

He rose slowly and stared blankly at the little group. His eyebrows worked convulsively, and he was trembling from head to foot.

"I will kill him," he said, as the memory of those insulting words flashed back to him, and he tried to leap on the prostrate man; but Pauline threw herself against Hugh, while Mrs. Fisher helped her husband to his feet and led him to their room. The bolt slipped, and Mrs. Terry drew a great sigh of relief.

"I won't have such performances," she exclaimed. "You 've got to learn to control yourself, Mr. Langmuir. A pretty reputation my

her, then she should share his crust and have nothing else. She was his; she belonged to him; and he cursed the day that had seen her enter the house of a rich woman. She had changed since then; she no longer preached absurd but delicious sermons to him about contentment, and doing one's duty well and leaving the rest to God. No, she had become ambitious and worldly. She had bitten into the fatal apple and found it toothsome.

He left his room, sending the door to behind him with an angry slam that was followed by a sudden crash, as though something had fallen. Mr. Fisher burst out of his room then, followed by his wife, and they both began to talk at once, but Mr. Fisher bade his wife shut up, and addressed Hugh.

"What the devil are you doing, banging doors around like this?" he said. "You jarred the whole house, and you 've been the means of smashing my shaving-glass. Yes, sir, the nail jumped clean out of the wall, and down came the glass; and if you think I am going to put up with your damn tantrums, you 're sold, I can tell you."

"I 'll get you another shaving-glass," said Hugh, "if you hold your impertinent tongue."

"Hold my tongue, is it? I 'll say what I like, and if you don't want to hear me you can clear out."

"If anybody clears out it will be you!" cried Hugh.

"Humph! I guess as long as I pay my board I will stay, and I don't care a cuss for a dozen

XX.

THERE was no welcome in her eyes when he entered the dining-room; she looked up at him coldly, and spoke never a word as he dragged a chair near her, and sat down astride it, laying his arms along the top.

"This can't go on, Pauline," he said.

She shuddered. "It is horrible. And I suppose Mr. Fisher will make a complaint to the police and have us all up in court."

"Oh, he won't do that."

"Why won't he?"

"Because he is a coward. He knows I would break every bone in his body if he made any more trouble. I did not hurt him to-night, only frightened him out of his wits. I ought not to have lost my temper, but while he thought I would not lay a hand on him he grew bold and insulting."

"What did he say to anger you, Hugh?" Pauline asked, lifting her clear brown eyes to his face.

"Everything he could think of — it is of no consequence, but I must take you away from here. I am not angry now; I have come to my senses, and I know what I am about, so don't think me

crazy when I say that I am going to marry you to-morrow, and leave my people up in the country to shift for themselves."

He brought the palm of his hand down on the table slowly, scanning Pauline from under his brows. She turned pale.

"I would not consent to such a thing," she said. "Shame on you, Hugh, to think of leaving your mother and sister in want."

"I could send them a little," he said. "You and I would have to live in two rooms; you might even keep a few pupils, though I hate such an idea, but, since I can't do what I want for you, I must do the best I can. If you do love me, you will throw in your lot with mine now, and not wait until I am rich enough to give you — Oh, I could never give you all you ought to have! Still we might be happy, Pauline, poor and working hard. I am wretched now."

He closed his lids over his blood-shot eyes and bit his lip, and after one glance at him Pauline turned her head away involuntarily, for his face was unpleasant to see, all contracted with pain.

"I am very sorry," she murmured.

"I don't understand why I am so wretched," Hugh said, wearily. "The future is bright enough; it is just now that is hard. If you had a comfortable home—if the Fishers had not come here—I could wait a year patiently, but I cannot quite fathom a vague fear that weighs me down. What is it, Pauline? What does it mean?"

He looked at her in helpless distress, like a hurt dog, begging for the touch of a kind hand.

"You are not well," she answered, "and you are irritated by the confusion in the house. We are just like the people in the Avenue; we quarrel and fight, and talk loud, and use bad language. Next we shall have a policeman rapping on the door with his club."

She laughed scornfully, but Hugh rose up and began to walk about the room, finally halting beside her to stroke her hair gently; and she took his hand, held it, laid her cheek against the palm, and looking up to him said, —

"Hugh, I have something to tell you. Madame Kenyon told me to-day that she could not keep me after this term, I did not give satisfaction; but she was good enough to say that she would get me a place in a school up on the Hudson River somewhere. No, don't draw your hand away; I am not done yet. And directly afterward Miss Berryan asked me to come and live with her, partly as a governess, partly as a companion. She will give me six hundred dollars a year and my board."

"And her cast-off gowns," Hugh added.

She flung his hand back and started from her chair in anger.

"I shall earn my living," she cried, "whether I do it pleasing Miss Berryan or slaving for you in a garret. Which shall it be? It is for you to decide."

Then she turned and left him. Through the opened door he saw her running swiftly up the stairs. He took out his pipe, filled it from the little chamois-skin bag, all covered over with fantastic devices, that she had made for him, and sat down in a chair so close to the table that he could rest his elbows on it and lean his head in his hands. He smoked slowly, staring the while at the blank wall. He did not stir; and when he had smoked out his tobacco he laid the pipe on the table and resumed his position again. At last his body swayed a little, his head fell forward on his arms, and he slept heavily for an hour, the single gas jet above him flaring and whistling.

Pauline had gone to bed, but she lay awake and listened for what seemed an eternity, and when she could bear the suspense no longer she dressed herself hastily and went down-stairs. The sight of Hugh frightened her; she grasped his shoulders and tried to rouse him.

"Hugh, wake up. Hugh, don't you hear me? It is I — Pauline; wake up, Hugh. Oh, don't torment me by pretending that you are dead."

He lifted his head suddenly. "Oh, I dropped asleep, did n't I? Yes, I smoked a pipe, and the tobacco sent me off. Any way, I was tired out. What were you saying, Pauline? I remember; you said I was to decide. I can't; I won't; you must."

He turned off the gas, leaving them in utter darkness, and taking her by the hand he led her

up to her room, and left her at the door without another word.

Early the next morning Mr. Fisher waylaid Hugh and apologized.

"Tell you the truth, I had had just a thimbleful too much, and I ain't a whiskey-drinker, and liquor makes me crazy. I can stand up to beer alongside of anybody, but whiskey knocks me right out. I don't know what I said to make you so thundering mad, but it is square now, ain't it?"

"I suppose so," said Hugh, with fairly good grace; but he knew that Mr. Fisher would never dare displease him again. He had slept soundly, the day was fine, and he was vaguely ashamed of all that he had done and said the night before. Looking back on it, it seemed as though he had played a very rowdy, low-lived part, and his taunt about Miss Berryan's cast-off clothes made him hate himself. The whole evening was like a hideous nightmare, and he idled about the upper hall waiting for Pauline to come out and pardon him. When she opened her door, he turned about, and then a word, a kiss, and peace was made in a minute, but she scolded him softly all the way down-stairs.

"What vexed me was that you should think I could wear her cast-off gowns," she said. "Miss Berryan is so fat, and has such a queer, bunched-up sort of a figure. Now, Hugh, you know I don't look like her. I am ever so much taller and

slimmer, but she is a good deal nicer than she looks."

"That is right, abuse her," said Hugh; "abuse the woman whose heart you have won, and who heaps kindness upon you because she loves you, and who is going to take you into her beautiful house and keep you safe until I can afford to marry you. Abuse her, darling. I am just wicked enough to like to hear it."

"I only said she was better than she looked."

"Ah, but she would rather look better than she is, if you know what that means."

They went into the dining-room, greeting the assembled company most politely, and even the young Fisher tried to act pretty, for his mother had warned him that if he was n't smart he might be chucked out of a window. This, together with the punishment his father had received, made a marked difference in the youth's conduct. Mr. Kane looked grave and troubled. The excitement of the night before had greatly alarmed his wife, and neither he nor she had been able to sleep. There was a tinge of reproach in his manner towards Hugh, which Hugh felt keenly.

"I guess it is all over," Mrs. Terry said to Mr. Kane when he was about to start forth to his day's work.

"It ought to be," he returned. "I won't stay here if there is another scrimmage."

Hugh overheard this, and his face burned hot. He was waiting for Pauline, with whom he pre-

ently walked across to Third Avenue, and they spoke earnestly about Miss Berryan's offer, which they agreed to accept. But Pauline said, —

"I will stay at Mrs. Terry's if you want me to, Hugh."

"I don't want you to stay; I am anxious to have you away from there, but what I want to do is to marry you and put you into your own home."

He glanced at her with an anxious, hopeful smile. He would not force her to become his wife now; it was for her to meet him half-way, to say that she would struggle with him out of the present darkness into the bright future, but she did not say it; she shook her head.

"Oh no, Hugh, that would be wrong. You have your mother to think of first. In a year, perhaps sooner, we can be married; not now."

"And by that time," he said, bitterly, "you will be so used to luxury that you will be unhappy without roses in midwinter."

"But you taught me how sweet roses are in midwinter," she returned, smiling up at him. Then she added, gravely, "Don't lose faith in me, Hugh. You hurt me when you say such things."

They parted at the corner, and he went about his duties all day with a heavy heart, remembering that soon, when the day's duties were done, there would be no Pauline to welcome him at evening. Indeed, as he drew near the house that night, he wondered if she had fled already, but she had not; she was there to greet him with a

warmth that could not rouse his drooping spirit, for he thought only of the lonesome time to come. She had seen Miss Berryan, she had arranged it all with Madam Kenyon, and she was to go to her new home on the morrow. He tried to smile and be glad that she was to enter upon a pleasanter life, and she was so full of anticipation that she hardly marked his forced lightness. When in the hall he kissed her good-night, he could not speak, but after she was in her own room, and he was in his, he felt as though all the joy had gone out of his life forever. She had chosen a path that would lead her farther and farther from him.

XXI.

DURING her first week in Miss Berryan's house, Pauline wrote Hugh homesick little notes, which he read with rapture. She waxed eloquent over her magnificent misery; for while everybody was kind and everything about her beautiful, she longed to be back in Mrs. Terry's dining-room with her sweetheart. When he went to see her Miss Berryan obligingly left them alone, but Hugh did not feel at ease in the snug library, beside the cheerful wood fire, and a shadow of restraint hung over Pauline, too. Neither could put the dissatisfaction into words, and though Hugh had longed for the touch of her hand he left Pauline with a vague sense of relief. He was conscious of his shabby clothes; he fancied that the man-servant eyed him disdainfully; and he was even morbid enough to feel like a housemaid's follower. Before he called a second time he bought a ready-made suit, which fitted well and had a dapper look, and when he presented himself to Pauline she did not upbraid him for his extravagance; she put a flower in his coat and declared that she was proud of him.

"For clothes do make a difference," she said, profoundly.

"They do indeed," he returned. "I hardly know myself. And you have a new gown, have n't you?"

"Yes; don't you think it is pretty?"

"Very pretty."

She glanced at herself in the mirror with such naive vanity that Hugh smiled in spite of himself, and yet he was not quite pleased to see how well she suited her surroundings. She belonged to the soft hangings, the rich rugs, the plush chairs, not to him. She was part and parcel of the luxurious house; she seemed to have grown up in it, and never to have breathed any other air than this, which exhaled the perfume of wealth and idleness. The dress she wore was quiet in color and simply fashioned, yet it was not the quiet and simplicity of poverty. It was a light ash color, soft of texture, so that the folds fell gracefully, and she wore three red roses on her breast. Despite a certain resolve, she had not been able to stand out against a gift of delicate lace: she had tried to, and failed, when Miss Berryan laid the filmy stuff against her cheek; so the lace was around her neck and wrists, and Hugh, who had a dim notion that such things were costly, did not like to ask her how she had come by the adornment. He suspected, and the suspicion was hateful. She was not earning honest bread; she was a pet, a toy, and the shamefulness of it stung him to the quick. To be sure she was the pet only of a spinster, but in Miss Berryan's affection there was an

element which seemed nauseous to him. It was not frank, womanly friendship; it was a sickening sentimentality.

"What do you do here?" he asked.

"Do? I read French to Jennie every morning, and I speak French with her, and teach her little poems" —

"About '*le lis, le lilas, le rose*'?" he broke in, harshly. "Well, and what else? That is not worth six hundred dollars a year and your board."

Pauline looked grieved. "I know it," she said, humbly, "but I amuse Miss Berryan, too."

"How?"

"Oh, Hugh, how can I tell you? I go shopping with her, and driving with her, and we talk, and she plays the piano, and I listen" —

Then Hugh burst out laughing.

"I wonder what Prosper would give me if I put on cap and bells for him!" he exclaimed.

But Pauline did not understand this gibe; she only knew that Hugh meant something disagreeable, and she assumed an affronted expression.

"I did not mean anything," he exclaimed. "What is there in the air of this house that rouses such a hateful, cantankerous spirit in me? Pauline, I feel like a communist; I would like to smash all the pretty things in the room."

He looked about him, his eyes resting longest on a pair of Dresden figures, the conventional shepherd and shepherdess, that smiled at each other coquettishly from either end of the mantel.

Their vapid, smirking faces excited his ire, and he fingered a carved ivory paper-cutter so nervously that Pauline took it from him.

"You will break that, and then what would you do?"

"Pawn my watch and get another; or go without the boots I need, so that I might make good the loss to Miss Berryan. What business has she with ivory paper-cutters and china dolls when I have n't money enough to support my mother and a wife and myself? I work, work, work, and I may work until I drop and die in the poor-house."

"But is n't Mr. Prosper to raise your salary in the spring?" said Pauline, rather alarmed by his wild eyes and rasping voice.

He laughed. "Yes, if — there is an *if* in the way. But suppose he does raise my salary to two thousand, or three thousand even? Will that give you a carriage and a box at the opera?"

"I don't want either, Hugh."

"You do; you want a house like this, and a man to bring your letters in on a silver salver, and a maid to brush your hair — you want them all, and you will be discontented without them. You take to luxury as a duck does to water, and I can't blame you. I ought to marry a servant girl who would sing as she scrubbed the floors, not a dainty, soft-handed creature like you. Oh, don't try to stop me. It is true, true, true! And I love you so that I can't give you up, though if I had a spark of generosity in me I would leave you."

"But I would not be left," she said, laying her hand on his.

He sank back in his chair again and tried to respond to her tender words in kind, but the Dresden figures mocked at him, the very fire seemed to sing an ironical song to him. When he endeavored to reason out why he was so wretched and depressed he despised himself, for, with Pauline to cheer him and his future assured, he ought to take bright views of life. A premonition of misfortune hung over him like a pall, and strive as he would to beat away the airy nothings that weighed him down, he was oppressed by a dull fear of he knew not what.

After he had left Pauline, and while he was walking up the Avenue, he saw by the light of a street lamp Gilbert Prosper strolling along slowly on the other side, as though it were a fine summer evening. In an instant, his misty forebodings took shape; he turned and watched Prosper enter his sister's house.

"Thank goodness, your Mr. Langmuir did n't stay very long," said Miss Berryan, trotting into the library, where Pauline sat, playing with the ivory paper-cutter that she had rescued from Hugh's vandal fingers. "I can't help wishing that you were not engaged to be married, for I think of some lovely plan, and then I remember Mr. Langmuir, and I have to stop. He spoils everything."

She pouted and frowned as she settled herself in a chair, and she continued in a grumbling tone, "For instance, to-night, when I was up-stairs alone, I wrote to Miss Perry, who is having a perfectly delightful time in Europe, and here we are shut up in New York; and we must go somewhere this summer, and I am sick of the mountains and sea-shore, and I would rather go to Europe than anywhere else"— She paused and glanced at Pauline.

"It would be pleasant," said Pauline, not attaching much importance to the spinster's words, which she was learning to listen to with a look of attention, and meanwhile carry on her own train of thought. To-night, she heard "Paris," "London," "Rome," repeated; she smiled gently at babble about the Black Forest and the Rhine, but all the time she was thinking of what Hugh had said. He had spoken truly when he told her that she was growing so used to the luxuries of life that she would not know how to do without them, and as she held her hands out to the fire she remembered the little flat in Ninety-Second Street, where the wind blew in at every chink and crevice. Would she be happy in some such home? Her heart sank, and to banish a picture of herself and Hugh eating early breakfast in a bare room she turned to Miss Berryan and paid close attention to what she was saying.

—"No reason in the world why we should not go, and I am tired of New York; it will never

seem like home to me, and a sea-voyage is just what I want, and you would enjoy it, too."

Pauline's pulses quickened. The picture of Hugh and herself in the mean little flat gave way to a vision of stately foreign cities. She leaned over the arm of her chair.

"But are you counting me in such a plan as that, dear Miss Berryan?"

"I could not make a plan and count you out," cried the spinster. "Yes, you and I will go to Europe; and we will go soon, too — perhaps in April."

"Would you take Jennie?"

"No, indeed. I would send her to pay her parents a visit, and you and I could have a lovely time and no trouble, for Katy is a splendid traveler, and knows how to look after trunks and tickets; or we might get a courier, or may be Gilbert would go. You know he was saying the other night that he meant to give himself a holiday, and if he would go with us it really would do him good, and be nice for us, too, don't you think?"

"Charming," said Pauline. "We would go to France?"

"Oh, I love France," cried Miss Berryan, "and there is always something to do or to see in Paris" —

"Who is going to Paris?" said Gilbert Prosper, who had stood for a minute on the threshold, listening to his sister and looking at her com-

panion. They both sprang up to welcome him, both talking, both laughing, and he glanced from one to the other, flattered, delighted, and agreeably bewildered. He was in evening dress; he had meant to come to the house earlier, but he had seen Hugh enter it, and waited until he saw him leave it again.

"You look awfully spruce, Gilbert," chattered Miss Berryan, who had not grown out of the idea that a dress-coat was connected with some sort of unwonted festivity. Her father had gone through life without owning one, and the world where men dress for dinner as a matter of course was unknown to the rich maiden. The trail of her native town was over her still. "It becomes you, this sort of a coat, though it is a pity that waiters always wear them; and I have heard that in England a gentleman puts on a swallow-tail right over gray or brown trousers, which must look odd, and I am glad you don't, Gilbert."

"Trust me not to commit such an atrocity," he said, "but I am not quite contented with myself. Can't you suggest something to brighten this funereal garb, Miss Valrey?"

She nodded; then took one of the roses she wore and fastened it in his coat. He put his nose down to smell it.

"That is just what I wanted," he added. "What's more, it is just what I hoped to get. Do you know, I feel like a lark to-night. Can't we do something, go somewhere?"

"Not contented here?" said Pauline, dropping down in her chair and folding her hands with a furtive glance of satisfaction at her finger nails.

"Yes, contented and happy," he said, sitting down, too, "but I am a bit restless. Jane, you were talking about Paris when I came in. Let us go to Paris to-morrow, we three. Now, Langmuir is simply dying to prove that he can run the shop better than I, and I am going to give him a chance to do it. I want a holiday. I went over to Jersey to-day, and from the ferry-boat I saw a big ocean steamer start, and I wanted to start, too, Heaven knows where, and Heaven knows why. When the demon of restlessness lays hold of a man, the mere screech of a locomotive is enough to make him buy a ticket to some place. What is there to keep me here? We are all such fools; we all think ourselves invaluable; we imagine the world will be turned topsy-turvy if we are not at our office every day in the week. And it is nonsense. When we die, nothing happens, except that our disconsolate friends have to chaffer with a gravestone man, that 's all. Now, I am going to die as far as the shop is concerned; I am going to pretend that I am an angel, with nothing to do but be good and happy."

He was talking half to himself, and when he caught sight of Pauline's face he smiled wistfully, but she was not smiling; she looked as though some disappointment had suddenly come upon her.

"Ah, how easy it is to make all manner of delicious plans!" she said.

"And easy to carry them out," said Prosper. "But half the fun is planning. This is a pretty good place to sit in and travel all around the world. We lose no trains, we are not bothered by baggage, no hotels are bad, and everything is as lovely as it can be."

"You are a little daft," Miss Berryan remarked, plaintively; "but Pauline and I are going to Europe in April, just for the summer, and I'll send Jennie up to Troy, and you can go too, Gilbert."

"To Troy? Now that is hard. I have got to go to Troy and let Jennie chuck books at me all summer, while you two lone ladies jaunt about Europe."

"Oh, you are too funny," Miss Berryan exclaimed. "You will go with Pauline and me."

"I could not go," Pauline said, with downcast face. "I could not leave Hugh."

Prosper shut one eye cunningly.

"What Langmuir needs is to be left to his own devices. He is developing into a tremendous business man, and quite casts me in the shade. Either he or I must go to England soon, for we are getting a market there for our goods, and if I don't run across to attend to sundry matters I shall send him. It is odd, but I find myself the old fogy of the concern. He suggests ideas which scare me; and yet the ideas are good, too, only

they are startling to a conservative person like me. You see, Miss Valrey, either way, you and Langmuir cannot be together this summer: for if my sister goes to Europe, and she won't go without you, I will be one of the party; and if she does not go, I will stay home, and across the sea sails Master Hugh."

Miss Berryan plunged into the details of a trip abroad at once. She even brought forth some guide-books, and they laid out routes and discussed lines of steamers, Prosper entering into it all with the gusto of a school-boy; and when he took his leave, he said, —

"Well, shall I secure passage to-morrow morning? We have to look after state-rooms early, for all America goes to Europe in April and May."

"Oh, no," gasped Pauline, in horror, and he laughed.

"Upon my word, I frightened you, did n't I?" he said.

"You are terrible," she exclaimed. "You take my breath away. Leave me out; I will go to Mrs. Terry's for the summer."

"I must be terrible indeed," he said, his face reddening a little, "if you would rather stay at Mrs. Terry's than go to Europe in my company. Good-night."

Pauline looked after him aghast, for he had left the room with scant ceremony, and the house-door was shut sharply.

"Have I offended him?" she asked.

"Gilbert is awfully touchy," said Miss Berryan, "and it was very stupid of him to misunderstand you; but he thought you did n't fancy the idea of having him go to Europe with us, and when men are touchy they go off at a tangent, and Gilbert is queer — he certainly is very queer."

She shook her head anxiously; she did not quite know what to make of her brother. By the next morning, however, she had come to the conclusion that worrying about anybody's peace of mind did no good, and she talked of the proposed journey at the breakfast-table, assuming that Gilbert would make one of the party. Jennie listened and pondered.

"Am I to stay here, Cousin Jane?" she asked, suddenly.

"Gracious, no. You will visit your mother."

"Oh," said Jennie. This was a hard blow, and the child's lip quivered. It was Mademoiselle Valrey who had done it all; it was because of Mademoiselle Valrey that she was to be sent to Troy — sent home to her quarrelsome brothers and sisters, her harsh father, her whining, fretting mother. "Am I ever — ever — to come back?" she asked, her baby-bosom heaving. Miss Berryan kissed and consoled her.

"We shall be away only for a few months, Jennie, and of course you are to come back; but I should think you would like to see your mother."

"Mamma is not so kind as you," said Jennie, "and I am happiest here, and I love you best, Cousin Jane."

Miss Berryan talked of the duty of children to their parents, but Jennie did not get much comfort from her remarks, and was so unhappy that Pauline went down town and ordered a magnificent doll's house for her, which diverted the child for a time, though tears welled up whenever Europe was mentioned in her hearing.

XXII.

ALTHOUGH Prosper felt piqued by Pauline's remark that she would not go to Europe, but spend the summer in Harloe Row, he did not believe that she meant it; and yet he wondered if she really loved Hugh so well that, rather than be parted from him, she would put up with the discomforts and privations of a life of poverty. He thought that she must regret having entered into her engagement; he saw that she did not regard him with disfavor, and he was sure that only a mistaken sense of honor made her keep her word to young Langmuir. He fancied his love was not purely selfish, for he knew that she would enjoy to the uttermost all the good things he could give her, and by making her his wife he was confident that he could make her happy — far happier than she could ever be in a couple of small rooms, with a struggling clerk for a husband. His love had grown out of pity, so he imagined, and yet the idea of her belonging to any man but him had power to set his heart beating hard and cause passionate desires to rise up and madden him. He must wait for her to see the folly of her present entanglement, but he could not sit by and calmly let her yield to the wishes of her lover. Prosper

meant to keep her from marriage at any cost, and it would be an easy matter to send her out of harm's way by persuading his sister that a journey to Europe, California, somewhere, was absolutely necessary to her own welfare; and if his sister traveled to parts unknown, so should his sister's companion. The thought that he might jaunt about the world for a while with Pauline stirred his blood, but still he would not give himself that pleasure if he thereby were to run the risk of frightening her back to Langmuir. He was fatuous enough to suppose that she did not fully understand his sentiments towards her, and he flattered himself that he had acted very prudently so far, for he had certainly refrained from catching her in his arms and telling her that he loved her. He judged himself not by what he did, but what he longed to do, and, measured by that standard, he was a model of restraint and sagacity. She was always in his mind. He had met her once in Twenty-Third Street, and since that he often idled near the place, hoping to meet her there again; for he would not go to his sister's house every evening in the week, and when he had stayed away four evenings running he felt like a hero.

Early one afternoon, as he ran down the steps of the elevated-road station, he saw Pauline hastening along Twenty-Third Street, her head bowed to the western gale, so that she did not see him raise his hat and wave his hand to her. It was a terrible day. The wind blew so hard that there

were few ladies who ventured out, and those who did scudded hither and thither like sloops under full sail, their skirts catching every gust. Prosper's first thought on seeing Pauline was that she ought to be at home, and he hurried to meet her, the blast behind him carrying him on half in spite of himself.

"Why did n't my sister let you have the brougham?" he said, as he turned to struggle beside her against the gale.

"Perhaps because I did n't ask her to. I did n't think it was so horrible out-of-doors, and I had an errand or two down town. I must get some note-paper here," and she turned into a bookstore and made the purchase, which was for Miss Berryan, while Prosper stood by, mentally inveighing against his sister for sending Pauline forth on trumpery errands on such a brutal day.

"See here," he said, "you can't walk home, and the cars are crammed full. I 'll get a cab. You wait here."

With that he darted out, leaving Pauline to look at a beautiful book, full of etchings, that the polite clerk brought her, and she was lost in study of a lovely mountain scene when Prosper returned, breathless and flushed.

"I have got a cab," he cried — "a shabby one, but the only one I could find; so come along, Mademoiselle. What are you looking at?" He bent over her shoulder, and they gazed at the mountain scene together for a minute.

"Upon my word, it 's very pretty."

"They are all exquisite," she murmured, caressing the smooth binding as though she loved it.

He thrust his hand into his pocket, glanced at her, but she shook her head, and the polite clerk winked at one of his fellows as the man and maid left the store. The cab was shabby indeed, and after Prosper had put Pauline into it he hesitated before he shut the door on her.

"Why, are n't you coming, too?" she said.

"Yes," and he took his place beside her, and carefully drew up the windows, and the cab rattled off, the loose panes of glass making a great din.

"Well," he said, "have you and my sister decided to go to Europe or Timbuctoo?"

"Europe, but I can't quite believe in the plan."

"Why not?"

"Oh, it is too good to be true, and I don't think I ought to go, if Hugh does n't want me to." She turned her appealing eyes on him and smiled.

He gave a short laugh. "Humph, I suspected that from the way you spoke the other night you would rather stay in Harloe Row than go abroad with Jane and me."

That made her smile of entreaty change to one of scorn, and her lips curled. "I don't see how you could imagine that."

"Don't you? Well, I did imagine it. Great is the power of love, you know. For the sake of

love, people do foolish things sometimes — even to preferring a half loaf to a whole loaf."

"Or Harloe Row to Fifth Avenue," she added.

He did not quite understand her; he was looking for significance in every careless speech, but since she took no offense at his blunt words he felt unreasonably elated, and said, —

"Mind you, I am going to Europe, too. I don't think of anything else. What do you want most to see over there?"

She answered "France," of course, and thereupon he began to tell her of some of his experiences in Paris, making her laugh again and again, until he marveled a little at his own success as a relater of imaginary tales. Suddenly, he became aware that the man was driving them in a reckless way, narrowly escaping the carriages in the Avenue.

"I 'm afraid the rascal is tipsy," he exclaimed, as the cab swerved near a big dray. "Why, the lunatic is lashing his horse into a run! Hallo there! hold on!"

He cried to the driver and tapped on the glass, but even as he did so the cab slewed, the hind wheels struck something, and over they went with a crash, the cab landing flat on its side, the horse falling. For a second, the danger that the horse would kick or get up and run was imminent, but Prosper had not lost his senses, and shouted to the man to sit on the brute's head, which he did with drunken solemnity.

"Pauline, you 're not hurt?" he cried.

"No, no; but let us get out — let us get out."

She struggled to open the cab door, but she could not raise it, nor could Prosper, for he had fallen under her, and did not dare move for fear of pushing her near the broken window panes. He caught her and held her still. It was all over in a minute. Some passers-by ran to the rescue, helped Pauline up through the door that faced the sky, and then Prosper climbed out, conscious of a smashed hat and a bruised head.

"Your wife ain't hurt, sir," said one of the group; "she ain't even fainted."

He pushed through the gaping crowd to where she stood, carefully adjusting her bonnet, and laughing rather hysterically.

"Oh, Mr. Prosper," she said, stretching out her hands to him, "you are not hurt?"

"Not a bit; but you — why, you are trembling — you are white as a sheet."

"Oh, I am all right — we both are. Was n't it an escape? How did it happen?"

He drew her hand through his arm and led her off towards his sister's house, which was not far away, fortunately for Prosper, who was terribly frightened, and could hardly speak. His fears were only for Pauline; he did not think of himself. The servant who opened the door to them did not notice their pale, excited faces, and only said that Miss Berryan was lying down and had given orders not to be disturbed.

"Let her alone, then," said Prosper, going through the hall directly to the dining-room, where he gulped down some whiskey, and compelled Pauline to drink a little too, although she declared she did not need it.

"Well," he said, drawing a long breath, "we got out of that safely. Sure you 're not hurt?"

"Perfectly sure — not even scratched. I behaved pretty well, did n't I?"

He looked at her. She had not known the danger; she was inclined to treat the accident as a droll episode, and not a narrow escape from death. His head hurt him, and he laid his hand on a sore place that threatened to develop into a big bump. Then she was full of pity for him; she must wet a napkin in iced water and put it on the bruise. She made him sit down and let her wait on him, hovering near him, touching his forehead with her hands, until he finally rose up in desperation.

"I can't stand this," he said. "I must go."

"You will see a doctor, won't you?" she pleaded.

"Much good a doctor can do," he returned, grimly.

"But you will see one. Perhaps it 's your brain."

He burst out laughing.

"So you think I 'm a little touched, eh? Perhaps I am. Is a lunatic asylum the place for me? Would you like to send me to Bloomingdale?"

"I would like to keep you here until you are fit to go out," she said, sweetly. "Stay, do."

She pointed to the chair, and he dropped down in it again, and let her put a fresh cold bandage on his head. In the midst of this ministering Jennie walked into the library, and opened her eyes wide at the spectacle of Cousin Gilbert lying back with a wet napkin around his head, and Mademoiselle Valrey standing over him.

"Gracious, goodness me!" she exclaimed, repeating her Cousin Jane's ejaculations of amazement.

"We met with an accident," said Pauline, and then gave a detailed account of it, Prosper throwing in a word now and then. Jennie pitied him, too, and stroked his hand, and brought more wet napkins, and if ever a man were coddled that man was Gilbert Prosper. At last, however, he asserted himself, declared that Miss Valrey must go to her room and lie down whether she felt like it or not, and grasping his battered hat, he set it on his head carefully, warned by his two nurses to remember the bruise, and after promising them to put on some arnica and see a doctor and stay home the next day, and to come and tell them how he was, he made his escape from the house.

Pauline was forced to admit the next morning that she felt a little sore from head to foot, but when Hugh came — it was a Sunday — she did not even tell him of the accident. She was shrewd enough to guess that Prosper would not

speak of it in the office, and as Hugh never saw Miss Berryan, if either of them could help it, she fancied he might remain in ignorance of what had occurred. To tell him would make it necessary to tell of meeting Prosper, of driving home with him, and she had learned that to mention Prosper's name was to bring a quick frown to Hugh's face. She sat and chatted with him until Jennie, who had been to church, walked in, and after greeting him, in her pretty, old-womanish fashion, she said, earnestly, —

"But was n't it lucky that Mademoiselle Valrey was not hurt yesterday?"

"There, Hugh," said Pauline, breaking in with a laugh, "now I shall have to tell you of my wonderful escape."

"What wonderful escape?" he asked.

"She has n't told you?" said Jennie, clasping her hands. He looked bewildered and displeased. What had Pauline been keeping from him? She related the story as briefly as she could, making light of it, and dwelling only on the absurd side; but Jennie was at hand to supply the least deficiency, and with childish pertinacity forcing Pauline into telling everything, even about laying cold-water bandages on Prosper's head. Hugh could not rid himself of the hateful suspicion that Pauline had not meant that he should know of the accident, although she averred that she was keeping the story to tell him just before he went.

"I am dreadfully tired of it," she said. "I

had to tell Jennie, and Miss Berryan, and Katy, and then the cook came in, and the coachman, and everybody, and probably the postman will stop and inquire after my health to-morrow. And I was n't hurt. I thought it funny."

"It does n't strike me as particularly funny," said Hugh. "I wonder you were not killed, or at least cut by the glass. Mr. Prosper got a bruise on his head, you say?"

"Yes; he fell under me, and I suppose that is why I escaped. He would n't own to being hurt; but I am afraid he is."

"He promised to come here to dinner, if he felt well enough," said Jennie, serenely.

"Well, I guess he keeps his promises," said Hugh, wishing the chattering child at the bottom of the deep sea. Her nurse came and took her away, but Jennie was reluctant to go. She greatly admired Hugh, poor though he was, and tried her best to see him whenever he came to the house; but as he usually paid his calls in the evening, she had not many opportunities of gazing upon his fine, melancholy face. To her childish eyes, he looked like one of the knights in her books of fairy stories, for there was a romantic streak in the little maiden, beneath the veneer of worldliness, and as she followed the nurse up-stairs she leaned over the banister railing and threw him a kiss. His heart warmed to her; he ran out into the hall, and held up his face to receive a salute, which she gave him.

"She 's a sweet little thing," he said, returning to Pauline.

"She 's a little schemer," was Pauline's retort.

"Oh no, you misjudge her. Poor child, she has grown up in this atmosphere that reeks of money, and it 's no wonder she has already got some notions in her head that have no business to be there."

"She is smitten with your charms," said Pauline, with a smile and a shrug. The smile and shrug were her own, but the words were Miss Berryan's, and they jarred on Hugh. He went back to the subject of the accident, asking a few questions that deepened Pauline's impatience, and she braced herself to hear him say that she ought not to be riding around in cabs with Gilbert Prosper. He did not hint at that, for, jealous though he was, he still had faith in her fidelity, and would not insult her by reproaching her for what he laid to her ignorance and thoughtlessness. He wondered a little that Prosper should have been in Twenty-Third Street; he knew well enough that it was Prosper's custom to alight at Fourteenth Street when he went up-town on the elevated road, but he could hardly suspect his hard-headed employer of straying sentimentally to the place where he had once met a lady whom he hoped to meet there again. He was only perplexed and grieved by it all, and he went away from the house to spend the rest of the day in

dreary solitude, haunted by ideas that he tried not to dwell upon. He wondered if Prosper dined with Miss Berryan, and had half a mind to go and see, but he could not play the spy. Had he gone he would have discovered Prosper and the two ladies chatting together, and the sight would hardly have soothed his perturbed spirit, or dispelled the doubts that were gathering in his brain.

XXIII.

THE winds of March rattled the shutters of Mrs. Terry's windows, and a mad whirl of snowflakes filled the air. Within, Mr. Fisher grumbled incessantly during dinner, his wife snarled, and their son emulated both parents. The dinner itself was a complete failure, too, which made the landlady cross, for she did not like soggy potatoes and strong mutton any better than her boarders; but she stoutly ate the food as though she enjoyed it, and meanwhile vowed vengeance on her butcher and her cook. She noticed that Hugh made a mere pretense of eating; she knew that he was ailing in body and mind, and she pitied him, because she loved him. She thought it was all owing to Pauline's absence, but, though he missed her unspeakably, it was a vague fear of an impending calamity, which he seemed powerless to avert, that filled his heart with trouble. How greatly he had depended on her he did not realize until she was gone from the house, until she was no longer where he could count upon her morning greeting, her fond good-night. When he returned to Mrs. Terry's after a day's hard work, he sometimes sat down to read, but he grew drowsy over his book and went to bed, where he tossed about

for hours before he could sleep. Or, when he thought he would go and see Pauline, the distance between Harloe Row and Fifth Avenue stretched out into weary leagues and disheartened him, yet he would dress himself with a sort of desperate energy and sally forth, the vision of her face beckoning him onward. But after he had made the journey, he was poorly paid for his trouble. She was not the same Pauline in Miss Berryan's library that she had been in Mrs. Terry's dining-room; while he sat beside her with her hand in his, perhaps, the distance between Harloe Row and Fifth Avenue still removed him far from her. It was an intangible barrier which he could neither scale nor beat down.

After the Fishers and Mr. Kane had left the table, he sat there irresolute, longing for her, and trying to muster up courage to change his shabby clothes and go to see her. Fatigue numbed his limbs; he thought he would smoke his pipe, as he was privileged to do, before he went to his room, but when he languidly took out his tobacco pouch Mrs. Terry laid her hand on his arm.

"Wait," she whispered. "I have something for you — something you like. You did n't eat a mite, and if I don't give that butcher a piece of my mind to-morrow, then my name ain't Terry."

"I had all I wanted," he returned, turning the tobacco pouch over in his hand so that he could see his initials embroidered in red silk on the other side.

"Oh, don't talk to me," said Mrs. Terry. "You are sick, and if you don't take care of yourself you will be sick in dead earnest."

"Send me to the hospital," said Hugh, absently.

She shook her head fiercely, and brought him some currant jelly and fresh bread, which she commanded him to eat.

"You are all out o' sorts," she said, sitting beside him, "but you must worry down this to please me. Cheer up, Mr. Langmuir."

"You are awfully good to me," he said, "and I kicked up such a rumpus in the house, too."

"I don't blame you," she returned. "I guess I know what Fisher said to make you mad. He and his wife hinted to me that they were afraid you did n't mean right by" — She broke off, for Hugh had turned to her with an angry light in his eyes. "There," she exclaimed, "now I 'm sure of it. Him and her have got to leave next month, and I 'll tell you what: you marry Pauline and come here and board. I 'd fix up a room for a parlor for you, and I would n't ask you a cent more than you can afford to pay. And let her give some lessons, just to occupy her time. Oh, I know a young man wants to take care of his wife. Bless you, I was a bride myself once."

She smiled in a shame-faced fashion, for she was quick-witted enough to be aware how incongruous her words and her appearance were to Hugh.

"I was a bride myself," she repeated, stoutly, "and my husband was going to do wonders for me; and Lord! I supported us both inside of a year, owing to his drinking habits. If he had n't been so fond o' liquor, he 'd have been somebody, for he was smart. And you don't drink and you are smart, and you will be somebody, but you 've got to begin low down. Now see here, you marry Pauline nilly-willy. Men don't understand women. We like to be bossed."

Here Mrs. Terry screwed up her brick-red face into a most crafty expression, and lowered her voice. Hugh spread the currant jelly on a slice of bread and gravely took semicircular mouthfuls out of it, as he had been wont to do in boyhood days, meanwhile listening to his landlady's wisdom.

"When I was a girl," she said, "I had two fellers after me, and one of 'em was a shy, blushing chap, who was most scart to death every time he come to see me. I can see him now, trying to hide his feet under a chair, and fooling with his watch-chain. I liked him first-rate, but he was as meek as Moses. He wanted to marry me, but while he was stuttering the other feller came right out, and says he, 'Lizzie, we 'll get married next week;' and we did get married, and a sweet marry it was, too; but he was cheeky and I was a little fool, just like any other girl. Why, the shy chap was twice the man, and he 's made money and lives nice."

"The moral of the story is clear," said Hugh, wiping the jelly off his mustache.

"Ain't it, though! You profit by it, young man. Don't dilly-dally; marry Pauline whether she wants to or not. Take a firm stand, and she 'll be pleased. But you won't!" cried Mrs. Terry, in bitter scorn. "You 'll go right on, letting her live with those rich folks, and you staying here, blue as you can be, and — well, and what?"

She stopped short to gaze at Hugh so fixedly that he flinched under her eager little gray eyes. He pushed back the plate of bread.

"Is Miss Berryan's brother after her?" asked Mrs. Terry. "Don't you look so mad about it. Did n't I see him and her the other day walking up Fifth Avenue, laughing and talking, and he could n't keep his eyes off of her. Pauline is nothing but a child, but he ain't a child, and when a man of his age gets an idea into his head it 's there to stay. He don't look like a bad man," she added; "he has a nice face — that is, if it was him that I saw with her."

"Tall, slim, full beard," said Hugh, curtly.

"Then it was him, and I saw him help her into a stage. He was glad to get a chance to take hold of her hand, and she" —

"It is a lie," said Hugh, starting to his feet.

"It is gospel true," said Mrs. Terry, "but there ain't no harm in it. You can't expect everybody to be blind but you, only you have got to take a stand."

It was a raw night, and Hugh was tired, but he went to Miss Berryan's house as fast as he could, not stopping even to make a change of dress. He remembered his limp collar and cuffs, his coat white at the seams, his trousers frayed at the feet, as soon as he was shown into the library where Pauline sat with Miss Berryan. He was the poor clerk to the ends of his fingers. A drop of the jelly was smeared on his vest, and shone sticky in the pitiless light; there were some ink spots on his hands, and twenty-four hours' growth of beard darkened his cheek and chin. He caught his foot in a rug, lurched against a table, and stammered awkward apologies in response to Miss Berryan's suave greeting, then stared at her as she went out of the room. He turned to Pauline, and was stung to the quick by her mocking smile. She had been watching him, and instead of pitying his embarrassment she was amused by it. Why had he come to this hateful house? he thought. What had he in common with Mademoiselle Pauline Valrey? He waited for her to speak.

"You need shaving, Hugh," she said.

"I know it — I rushed here in a hurry."

"What is that on your vest?"

He looked down at himself, and began to rub the jelly off with his handkerchief.

"It 's jelly," he answered. "I guess ammonia will take out the stain. I am afraid I don't look very neat, Pauline, but I wanted to see you, and I

was too tired to dress up, so I just came along as I was."

"Oh, no matter about your clothes. Straighten the rug, please. When you tripped over it, I thought you were going to fall into Miss Berryan's arms. I wish you had!"

"Yes, I suppose it would have been funny — for you."

She laughed, but he did not. He straightened the rug with his foot, and rubbed hard at the spot of jelly.

"Don't — *don't* polish your vest any longer," she exclaimed. "You are only making yourself sticky."

"Shall I go home?" he asked, cramming his handkerchief into his pocket. His chest heaved and his dark eyes flashed. She rose, but did not come very near him, and, clasping her hands behind her, she turned her cheek to him gracefully and said, "Kiss me."

He caught her to his breast, despite her sharp remonstrance, then released her quickly.

"Oh, Hugh," she exclaimed, almost in anger, "you are so rough."

"I can't be gentle and patient any longer, Pauline. You shall not stay in this house, eating food and wearing clothes that you buy with your smiles and pretty ways. No, I am going to marry you."

"When, please?"

"To-morrow."

She smiled; she had satisfied herself that his

rude embrace had not disfigured her ash-colored gown, only crushed her roses.

"To-morrow?" she echoed, and there was a touch of mockery in her voice that sobered him.

"Well, soon; say next month. Mrs. Terry is going to turn the Fishers out and make the room you used to have into a little parlor for you" —

"Oh, no, I could not go there," she cried.

"You can, and you must. We should be very comfortable, and I can't live on in this way. It is killing me."

"But your mother, Hugh?"

"I will do what I can for her. My sister is to begin teaching in the spring, and my brother has the promise of a place in the mill. I can manage. Trust me."

He could not bear to suggest that she might give a few lessons, and thus eke out the income; she did not suggest it; she sat stunned, motionless. Her lips quivered, and the sight of her grieved, troubled face filled Hugh with despair.

"Oh, Pauline, you don't love me any longer."

"Yes, yes, Hugh, but I don't know what to say or do. I am sure we ought not to be married now. If you neglected your mother for me, I should not be happy — I could not be; and then, too, Miss Berryan must be considered. If I left her suddenly, she would have every reason to think I was more than ungrateful."

"You dread poverty," said Hugh. "You are unwilling to go back to small rooms and plain

fare. You don't mean to deceive me, but you deceive yourself."

Her transparent face bore silent witness to the truth of his words, although she put forth an indignant disclaimer. It was in vain that she protested; he was not to be overcome by her protests, and at last she half confessed.

"Well, suppose I do dread poverty?" she exclaimed. "Suppose I do dread to go back to Mrs. Terry's? Who was it taught me in the beginning to care for money and what money brings? You — you were always talking about what you meant to give me, and now you beg me to live with you in two wretched rooms. You are angry because I hesitate. You say I deceive you, I don't love you, when I remind you of your poor mother. Oh, Hugh, you are unjust, unkind, cruel. But still, I have no one but you, and I will do as you wish."

"Then we shall be married soon," he said, doggedly.

"Whenever you will; only remember it will be against my own inclination — my judgment."

She came and sat on the sofa beside him; she slipped her hand in his, and under her soft words he grew gentle and almost happy. She entered into all his plans; she calculated with him how much they would spend, how much they could send to his people, but presently she said, —

"If you would only put our wedding off until the autumn, Hugh! Be angry if you like, but re-

member, Miss Berryan has been very kind to me, and it will hurt her, disappoint her, to have me leave her now. She wants me with her so much this coming summer."

"But I want you, too, Pauline."

"Yes, and I would rather be with you, Hugh. You know that." She nestled nearer to him, and put her head on his shabby coat sleeve. "I get lonesome here, homesick; yet it is right that I should stay a little longer away from you. You are urging me into doing something that I feel is wrong. My heart pulls me one way, my conscience the other. Put your arm around me, Hugh. I wish we two could go somewhere away from everybody — not to Mrs. Terry's. Her house would make me sad, for every minute that I am there I remember my father."

"Then I will never take you there, Pauline," he said.

"Promise me that, Hugh."

"I promise it."

She drew a sigh of relief. "Ah, you do understand! And when we are married, Hugh, I want to begin anew; I wish we might leave New York, go somewhere else, and know nobody."

She looked up at him wistfully. "You thought I had forgotten my father," she added, "but he was with me so long, we two were so much together, that when I am in the house where he used to live I am always listening for his footstep. And it was the same in the school; that was one

reason why I was so anxious to leave it. Ah, Hugh, you misjudge me. This new life is grateful to me because it drives sad thoughts away. You don't know how many sad thoughts I have, but looking back it seems as though all the past was dark — until you came."

"And I hope I shall never cause you any sad thoughts, Pauline."

"No sad ones, but troubled ones. I want our wedding to be bright and gay, to go with you in all joy, but I cannot do it now. Will you wait, Hugh?"

"Yes," he answered, hoarsely; "and until when?"

"Until September — that is not so far away. Miss Berryan wants me to go to Europe with her this summer" —

"To Europe" —

"Yes, but if we don't go there, we shall go somewhere else. She never stays in town during July and August. I could not be with you."

"That 's so," he said. Without looking at her, he added, "And does Prosper go too?"

"I suppose so — I am not sure. He has talked about it."

Her heart began to beat fast, and she dreaded his next words.

"Oh, well," he said, drawing a long sigh, "I can't keep you. I see that — you must go wherever Miss Berryan likes, but it is hard on me. I — I 'm an unlucky devil."

He tried to smile, and the wretched effort he made roused her pity.

"Hugh," she said, impulsively, "it is only for a little while."

"A little while," he echoed. "We only have to live a little while, but we manage to get a good deal of misery into our threescore and ten. It is a pity we can't be contented if we have enough to eat and drink, and clothes to cover us. We can't, though." He passed his hand over his heart slowly, "Ah, Pauline, I can't laugh at myself."

She looked at him in wonder; she did not understand him. After he had gone, she tried to understand herself, but she could not. She loved him, yes, she loved him of course, but she did not want to go to live with him on Mrs. Terry's third floor, of that she was very sure. She began to feel badly treated, and wept softly for no reason whatsoever.

XXIV.

"MISS BERRYAN?"

"Yes, my dear, I 'm listening." And Miss Berryan shut her book slowly.

"I think I will call on Mrs. Terry to-day. I have been there only once since I left, and that was to get some things I had forgotten. I really ought to go."

"What for?"

"Oh, to please Mrs. Terry. She was very kind to me."

"Well," said Miss Berryan, "I guess you paid her for all you got."

Pauline winced a little. "Yes, I paid her, of course, for my board, but she was kind — not like a mere landlady — and she would be hurt if I neglected her entirely. Oh, I must go, and I will go this afternoon, if you don't need me."

"I 'll send you in the brougham," cried Miss Berryan, but Pauline refused to be sent; she went to Harloe Row in a humble horse-car. The unkempt servant who opened the door stared and smiled.

"Yes, Mis' Terry, she 's home. You go an' set down an' I 'll call her."

She called her with a vengeance, standing at

the foot of the staircase, and sending stentorian shouts up to the floor above. Pauline heard heavy, hurrying footsteps while she sat in the hideous little parlor where she had spent so many long, tranquil evenings. Nothing was changed; there was the sofa in the corner, there was the marble-topped table, there were the ghastly wax water-lilies, and there was the chair Hugh had mended, standing just where it would hide a worn spot in the green and red carpet. Memories sweet and sad crept over Pauline, slowly. She thought of her girlhood, of her father, of herself, as she had been, and for a while the house in Fifth Avenue, Miss Berryan, and Gilbert Prosper were absolutely forgotten. She was reminded of them by a glimpse she got suddenly of her own face in the tarnished mirror, and the sight of her pretty bonnet, — such a bonnet as she had never had in the days gone by, — brought up the present vividly.

Mrs. Terry bustled in, apologizing for her untidy appearance.

"I thought I would n't keep you waiting while I dressed up, and anyhow, you are used to seeing me in my work clothes. You look as pretty as a pink," she added, wistfully, "but you always do; it don't make any difference, Pauline, whether you wear silk or calico, you" — and then Mrs. Terry burst out crying. "Oh, I 'm an old fool, an old fool," she said, wiping away her tears with a tidy that she snatched off the back of a chair; "but the sight of you, Pauline, somehow has

kinder upset me. I can't help remembering how nice it used to be when you were here, and dear old M'seer, and now it 's so different; and Hugh, he 's the most miserable chap I ever set eyes on — Are you real happy?"

She looked at Pauline earnestly. There were tears in the girl's eyes, too.

"I thought I was," she said, humbly, "but I wish I were here again — I wish I had never gone away."

She rose, and walking across the parlor, seated herself in the corner of the old green sofa.

"It was so long ago — so long ago," she murmured. She kissed the sofa cushion passionately. "Mrs. Terry," she exclaimed, "how foolish we are!"

"Ain't we, though!" cried Mrs. Terry. "Mebbe we can settle down now, and talk; but we had good times here, you and M'seer and Hugh and me, all sitting here of an evening, a real peaceful family. And M'seer reading his paper, and looking at me sometimes with such a rideeculous smile, because you and your beau was there on the sofa, making believe study French."

Pauline's smile grew tremulous again.

"Yes," she said, "it is like a dream — a dream of heaven. I feel so old now, Mrs. Terry. Tell me, do I look old?"

She leaned forward, the color deepening in her cheeks, the sweet, sad smile lingering on her parted lips. There was entreaty in her eyes, and

the tiny bunch of violets she wore on her breast rose and fell with her quick breath.

"You ain't gray or wrinkled yet," said Mrs. Terry, with her bitter sarcasm, "but you are old, ma'am, there ain't no gitting around that. Old!" she repeated, fiercely, so fiercely that Pauline started; "you 're a mere baby! What are you talking about? Want a piece of gingerbread?"

"Raisins in it?" asked Pauline.

"Chuck full of 'em," and Mrs. Terry trotted out of the parlor, returning breathless after a trip to the kitchen. "Now you hold on," she added, "you must n't grease yer gloves. Take 'em off."

Pauline obeyed, and she also had to have a napkin tucked under her chin before she was allowed to touch the gingerbread. She ate it like a child, while Mrs. Terry watched her like a mother.

"I went and made my will," she said, suddenly.

"You left me something, I hope," said Pauline.

"Left you every red cent I've got. There ain't many of 'em, but I guess there 'll be a little over after you 've buried me decent. And then there 's the furniture. The carpet up in Mrs. Kane's room is bran new."

Pauline flung her arms around Mrs. Terry's neck and kissed her.

"Oh, don't you make a fuss," said Mrs. Terry, "'cause mebbe I 'll change my mind. I was sick last month, and, thinks I, what 'll become of my things if I die? Tell you, none o' my cousins will get 'em, no sir, so I made my will and I left

'em all to you. I did n't mean to let on about it, though. Now, if you 've eat gingerbread enough, come up-stairs and see Mrs. Kane."

Pauline stayed only a little while in Mrs. Kane's room, and when she returned to the parlor she said, hesitatingly: —

"Does Hugh seem well, Mrs. Terry?"

"No, he don't, and he ain't well. He 's just sick, body and soul, but I don't know what ails him exactly, only he 's lonesome. He got used to having you round, and he don't know how to live without you. Some men are that way, but not many. Hugh is different from most."

"I wish I knew what to do," Pauline said. "Sometimes I think I had better come back here to live — take private pupils."

Mrs. Terry eyed her suspiciously. She loved Pauline, but she mistrusted her a little; she thought the girl would never of her own accord return to plain fare and cotton gowns.

"You must do what you think best," she said, gravely. "Hugh will be glad to hear you have been here, anyhow. I wish you would come often, though there ain't much I can do to make it a lively place for you to come to. Say, you will have a birthday next week Wednesday — mebbe you think I 'd forgot it — and you come over to dinner and stay all night. Let 's have a kinder celebration. Hugh would like that."

Pauline's face brightened.

"Yes, I will come. Don't tell him; I will surprise him."

They began to make plans at once, Mrs. Terry declaring she would have a cake with candles around it, and a nice little supper. She would banish the obnoxious Fishers for one night; she would manage it in some way or other.

"Next week, Wednesday," she said, at parting. "Don't you forget."

"Next week, Wednesday," Pauline echoed. "Trust me not to forget."

Mrs. Terry stood on the door-step and watched her trip down the street, watched her wait on the corner until a car came along, and then the landlady went into the house, shaking her head.

"I don't know what to make of her," she said, aloud to herself, "I don't know what to make of her."

That night, when Hugh came home, she told him that Pauline had called, and he showed first surprise, then pleasure.

"I wish I had been here to see her," he said.

"What 's to hender you from going to see her every night of the week?" she asked.

"Well, nothing, really, but I don't like to go. I drive Miss Berryan away, and I don't feel comfortable there. The house is too fine for me — something makes me hate to go there, though I 'd like to see Pauline oftener than I do. I suppose she told you she was going to Europe."

Mrs. Terry turned on him.

"Going to Europe! She did n't even hint at it When 's she going?"

"Next month, so Mr. Prosper says. He spoke to me about it to-day."

"And he 's going?"

Hugh nodded; he did not meet Mrs. Terry's sharp eyes.

"Hugh," she said, earnestly, "don't you let her go" —

"How am I to prevent her? She 's got to earn her living, and she 's earning it in an easy way, and I ought to be glad of it. Why should n't she have as much pleasure as possible? Why should I act ugly about nothing? I can't marry her."

Mrs. Terry laid her hand on his arm, but he broke away from her and ran up-stairs to his bedroom. Prosper had told him of his proposed trip to Europe in the course of a business conversation, and as though it could be but of scant interest to the book-keeper, save that it put a little more responsibility on his shoulders. His curt manner had stung Hugh; it was simply that of a master towards a clerk.

"How can I prevent her? How can I keep her from going?" Hugh muttered again and again while he washed his hands and brushed his hair. He could not bear to think of her in the company of Prosper day in and day out. He swore to himself that he trusted her implicitly, but yet — He threw his brush on the floor in a rage.

"Damn it, she shall not go."

The next day, he went down town with the air of a man who has taken a resolve, and he went

straight to the office of his broker friend, where he stayed so long that the clerks in Prosper's office wondered what had become of Langmuir, who was usually punctual almost to the minute. He entered at last and took his place at his desk without giving any reason for his tardiness. Late that afternoon, he went to Miss Berryan's house for a ten minutes' chat with Pauline, who kept him waiting what seemed like an hour to him, and when she did appear, the elegance of her dress amazed him. He made no comment on it, however, although he raised his eyebrows high and then brought them together in a frown. She sat down, folded her hands in her lap, and looked up expectantly, for he did not seat himself, but leaned over her chair.

"Pauline," he said, "I have been thinking it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that if we wait much longer we never shall be married at all."

"That 's absurd," she exclaimed.

"Call it absurd, but when I get an idea into my head, I can't get it out — perhaps I am superstitious. Now, tell me honestly, would you rather marry me this spring, or put off our wedding until you have made your trip to Europe?"

She stretched out her hand to him. "Hugh, I think it is too late to ask me that now. I have promised Miss Berryan to go, the tickets are bought, and it would not be right for me to spoil all her plans, at this late day."

"I don't want you to go," he said, doggedly. "I have n't the time to tell you all about it at this minute, but I see my way to making a little money, enough to tide us over for a year very comfortably, and there is no reason why we should not be married this spring — if you are willing. Are you willing?"

"How often am I to say yes, Hugh? But you have your people to consider."

"I have not forgotten them." There was a moment's silence then, and Pauline broke it with impetuous words.

"You must not urge me, Hugh, to do what I believe is wrong. In the first place, I have promised to stay with Miss Berryan until the fall, and in the second place, you cannot, ought not, marry me when your mother and sister need so much help from you. How should I feel if I had a son or a brother who left me when I was poor, and took some strange girl and gave her what I had a right to expect? No, Hugh, no."

Her words were spoken warmly, but Hugh seemed hardly to hear them. He sat down on the arm of her chair, and smoothed the back of her hand absently.

"Suppose," he said, "I sent a check for a thousand or twelve hundred dollars to my mother? That 's a great deal of money in the country."

"How could you get it?"

"Not by stealing or borrowing," he answered. "I have saved some, and I am pretty confident

that I can send my mother within a short time enough to carry her and the two youngsters along for a year or so. Come, Pauline, have courage — put your faith in me."

She did not ask him how he proposed to raise a sum that seemed so large to her; she was wondering what Miss Berryan would say if her companion deserted her suddenly. The spinster might be very disagreeable; and, in her heart of hearts, Pauline did want to go to Europe that summer. She lacked the courage to tell Hugh so; she cudgeled her brains for a reason why the marriage should be postponed until the autumn.

"Well?" he said.

"Oh, I will do whatever you think best, Hugh."

He got up and looked around for his hat, which he had dropped on the floor, and he took it and dusted it absently with his handkerchief, while Pauline watched him out of the corner of her eye. She was puzzled and she was curious, but she did not want to ask questions, lest he should prove to her conclusively that there was no reason in the world why they should not be married at once, and set up housekeeping in three rooms.

"You tell Miss Berryan," he said, slowly, "that she will have to dispense with your company next month. Will you be glad or sorry to leave here?"

"It depends upon where I am to go when I leave here. I prefer this house to Mrs. Terry's, strange as you may think."

Her tone nettled him. "You don't care any-

thing about me," he cried. "These people have turned your head, but they can't keep you with them forever, unless you choose to cut loose from me."

He marched out of the library, through the drawing-room, to the hall, and then he turned back again to the library.

"Pauline, forgive me," he said, "and before I go, tell me that you do love me best."

"I can't love you best," she returned, "for I love no one else at all."

XXV.

A WEEK passed, each day adding a touch of spring color to the grass and trees in the Park, where Pauline walked every morning with Jennie, both dutifully speaking French, when they spoke at all. On Sunday afternoon Pauline went to the Park with Hugh, but it was crowded on the east side with men, women, and children, a good many of them loud in dress and loud in talk. On the west side, however, far up towards Seventy-Second Street, there were not many people, and Hugh discovered a bench in a spot somewhat shielded from the gaze of passers-by. The day was very warm, and summer seemed almost at hand, although it was only the first week of April. He complained a little of the heat.

"I suppose we shall have a frost next," he said. He was very pale, and his eyes looked as though he had not slept well. "If everything turns out as I hope," he continued, "we will go up home this summer. Have you told Miss Berryan that you will not stay with her many weeks longer?"

"No, Hugh."

"You have n't? Why not?"

"Because — because I think I must stay with her. Oh, don't let us talk about that, Hugh. I am so tired of talking about it."

"But I must talk of what I think about," he exclaimed. "I lie awake all night, planning how I am to keep you. I know that if you go off to the end of the world with this Berryan woman, you will never come back. You think you will, but once you are on the other side of the sea, — You shall not go, Pauline."

He spoke so loud that a gentleman riding along the bridle path turned to look, then put his horse to the trot and hastened off, as though he thought the tempestuous young man on the bench was a dangerous person.

"Don't shout," said Pauline. She rose as she spoke. "I am going home; I will not stay here and listen to you talk in this way."

He let her go alone, watching her until she disappeared around a turn.

"What am I to do?" he said to himself. "Any way" — and then he hurried after her, but made no effort to join her, only followed her at a little distance nearly to Miss Berryan's door. He walked back to Mrs. Terry's, and mounted the stairs to his room, where he lay down on the bed and tried to sleep away the rest of the long afternoon. Sunday was a peaceful day, for the Fishers always spent it with some friends in Hoboken. At six o'clock, Hugh went down to tea, and he and Mr. Kane afterward smoked and talked in the dining-room.

"What ails you?" said Mr. Kane. "Hugh, you ain't well; you have aged ten years in looks."

"I don't sleep, that 's all. I 'll be glad when I can get away for a couple of weeks — think I 'll run up home."

"Take your wife along?" said Mr. Kane, jocosely.

"Yes, I hope so. I expect to be married this spring, but I don't dare count on it. Something may happen to prevent."

"I hear we are going to have Pauline over here next Wednesday," Mr. Kane said. "Mrs. Terry was telling my wife about it — a little birthday celebration."

"Birthday celebration? Oh yes, next Wednesday is her birthday. I came pretty near forgetting it. Is she to be here?"

Mr. Kane whistled. "I guess the women meant to surprise you, and I have let the cat out of the bag. I did n't know it was a mystery."

"Oh, I 'll be surprised," said Hugh, smiling, and for a minute his face was bright and joyous, but it soon clouded over again. He slept that night, slept heavily, and dreams tormented him so that he awoke unrefreshed and with no appetite for breakfast. Mrs. Terry watched him force down some bread and butter, but before he left the house, she took him aside, and gave him a glass of whiskey and water. It was a weak enough mixture, and yet it sent the blood tingling through his veins, and exhilarated him. The effect died away soon, and at noon he repeated the experiment, to the great astonishment of his broker

friend with whom he lunched, for it was not Langmuir's custom to order cocktails.

"I am all out of sorts," he said, apologetically.

He meant to call on Pauline that evening, but he was too tired to go; he wrote her a note instead, and the next day brought a reply from her, couched in tender terms. She was sorry she had been so cross on Sunday. Would he forgive her, and come to see her soon? He dressed himself carefully and went to Miss Berryan's that evening, but as soon as he entered the house he wished he were leagues away, for he saw Prosper's hat and coat on a chair in the hall. Prosper shook hands with him warmly, Miss Berryan gave him her hand, too, and then they considerately withdrew, leaving the lovers alone in the library. On the table lay a neat little book in red covers. It was Baedeker's Guide to Paris and its environments, and before Hugh's attention was attracted to it, Pauline deftly slipped it under a magazine.

"You are not vexed with me?" she said, bending over and kissing him. He shook his head. "But I was cross. Hugh, what has happened to you?" she added, startled by his face.

"That 's what everybody asks me," he said, with sharp irritation, "and there 's nothing happened to me. I slave from morning until night; I go to a boarding-house where there are people who drive me crazy with their talk; I have got to sit down and see the girl I want to marry carried off out of my reach, and you expect me to grow

fat and cheerful. Then I come here, where I 'm not wanted " —

She laid one hand on his mouth, and with the other she smoothed his hair gently.

" You make me feel as though I were to blame," she murmured, " and I would do anything for you."

" Except stay with me," he said, drawing her hand away, and looking up in her face. He saw her lips tighten. " I don't understand you, Pauline. They say no man ever yet did understand a woman. I used to think that was bosh, but I guess it 's gospel truth."

He took a letter out of his pocket, and gave it to her to read. It was from his sister, and she had good news. She had been called upon suddenly to fill a vacancy in the village academy, and if she gave satisfaction, she was sure of the place when the fall term began. Moreover, the younger brother had found employment in the office of a shoe factory. His salary was small, but he, too, had reason to hope for better things in the future. The letter was bright and cheerful, and the mother had added a short postscript, full of fond words for her dear boy Hugh.

" So you see," he said, as Pauline returned the letter to him, " I really ought to be in a very bland frame of mind to-night, but I 'm not."

" And then why are n't you? "

" Because you are going to Europe."

" But it is only for a little while."

She did not offer to give up the trip, and Hugh did not urge her. He did not stay long, and as soon as he had gone, Miss Berryan and Prosper came back to the library, and took up the conversation just where it had been dropped at Hugh's appearance.

"Oh, by the way," said Prosper, "I almost forgot to tell you, but I want you to go to the theatre with me to-morrow night. Somebody is to have a benefit at the Academy, and all the best actors in town are to take part. I have a box. You will go, won't you?"

He looked askant at Pauline, whose face flushed with pleasure, but who said never a word.

"Why, of course we 'll go, Gilbert," said his sister, "and I am glad you thought of it, for it seems ages since I was inside of a theatre, though Pauline and I have been to some concerts; but there 's nothing like a good play, after all."

"This is to be a sort of hodge-podge," he said. "An act from 'Camille,' an act from 'Engaged,' an act from 'She Stoops to Conquer,' — a little of everything, but it is bound to be good of its kind. They say," he continued, "that we have no actors to compare with the French, and this summer, Mademoiselle Valrey will have to take us to the theatre in Paris and translate for us."

She smiled, and her eyes glistened.

"See Paris and die," cried Miss Berryan.

"See Paris, and begin to live," he remarked, with significance. "Well, I must go now, but

don't forget — to-morrow at six sharp. And you are to be ready for me when I call. No stopping to prink."

He shook hands with his sister, and then took Pauline's hand, hesitated, looked at her inquiringly. "You want to go, don't you?" he said, frowning a little. "You don't have to, you know, just because Jane does."

"What a ridiculous idea!" said his sister, but still Prosper was not satisfied and waited for Pauline to speak.

"Yes," she said. "I don't see why I need say so, though; you ought to take it for granted."

"A man does n't dare take much for granted," he said in a low tone, but his sister did not hear him; she had crossed the room to ring the bell — a signal to the butler that he could close the house doors for the night. Pauline glanced at him reproachfully, and shook her head.

"I think we understand each other," he said. "Good-night."

Once he was gone and Pauline was in her room, like a flash there came to her the remembrance of the promise she had made to spend the next evening at Mrs. Terry's. Which engagement should she break was a problem that puzzled her until she fell asleep, and confronted her as soon as she awoke. The idea of a birthday celebration in Harloe Row was not very alluring, but the idea of a dinner at Delmonico's, a box at the Academy! —

"Oh, dear!" said Pauline, brushing out her

hair fiercely. "At any rate, Hugh knows nothing about it. He can't feel hurt."

Half dressed, she sat down and wrote a hasty note to Mrs. Terry. It did not please her, and she wrote another, which ran as follows: —

DEAR MRS. TERRY, —

I am sorry I cannot come to-day, as I half promised I would. It is quite impossible. My time is not always my own. I am glad that no one knows I meant to come, except you, for now only you and I can be disappointed. I shall not have any birthday at all. Yours affectionately,

PAULINE VALREY.

She wrote the note in a hurry, and sent a servant to post it before breakfast; then she wished she had broken the other engagement instead. It was too late, however, to make any change in her plans, but she was nervous and impatient all that day.

"I am glad Hugh did n't know anything about it," she said over and over to herself, "and I will go and see Mrs. Terry to-morrow."

The day wore away. At five o'clock a boy came bringing flowers for Miss Berryan and Mademoiselle Valrey, which they knew were from Prosper, although there was no card or note.

"I believe flowers ain't fashionable just now," said the spinster.

"Oh, a fig for fashion," cried Pauline. She

was a changeable creature; sometimes she was pale, thin, insignificant almost, and again her cheeks would get a lovely color, her eyes grow bright, and the whole woman be transformed. This was what she called one of her "good days," for she knew well enough when she looked her best, and the consciousness of a becoming toilet added a charming confidence to her manner. Gone were shyness and reserve, gone all remembrance of the unpleasant things of life, and when Prosper came in he found her radiant — and he told her so! He was, however, somewhat silent at first; he seemed preoccupied, but he grew gay, too, and presently he and Pauline were chattering to each other at the table which stands in the northeast corner of Delmonico's, while Miss Berryan sat by, chuckling and eating, contented for awhile to be left out of the conversation. They lingered over the dinner, and it was late when they took their places in the box at the Academy. After the curtain had fallen for the first time, Pauline surveyed the audience through the opera-glasses Prosper slipped into her hand, and from her position, she commanded pretty nearly the whole house. Suddenly she let the glasses fall.

"I saw Hugh standing way back there," she said.

Prosper smiled. "You imagined you saw him."

"No, I did see him — he was looking straight at me."

Her voice trembled with excitement, and she

raised the glasses to her eyes again, her hand shaking a little.

"He has gone," she said, "but he was there — or else," she added, "it was his ghost."

All her pleasure fled. She sat out the performance bravely, striving to make a show of enjoying herself, but when Prosper took her hand to help her into the carriage, he felt it tremble in his grasp. At the house, he bade the coachman wait for him.

"I have no matches," he said, as he followed the ladies up the steps, "and I am dying for a cigar."

"You can smoke it here," said his sister. "We don't want to go to bed yet for an hour, and after I have been anywhere, I like to talk it over; and any way, it is n't so very late. Sit down, Gilbert. I must go up-stairs, but I 'll be right back."

He cut off the end of his cigar carefully.

"You look tired, Pauline," he said. "Don't stay up on my account."

She had found a note for her on the library table, and she tore it open dejectedly.

"I 'll see what Hugh is writing to me about, first," she said. Prosper laid his unlighted cigar on the mantel, and watched her while she read.

XXVI.

On that same Wednesday at noon, Hugh went out to get his luncheon as usual, but it was long past one o'clock when he returned to the office, and instead of taking his place at his desk he tapped on the door of Prosper's private room.

"He ain't in yet," said one of the clerks. Hugh stood by the door for a minute, thinking, then walked slowly to his desk, and made a pretense of going on with the routine work of the day. Prosper came in finally, and Hugh followed him.

"I want to speak to you," he said, in a low tone.

"I have n't time, now, Langmuir; I am going up town at once."

"But I must speak to you," and Hugh closed the door behind him, and faced Prosper. "I have been taking the firm's money; I have kept it to myself until I am crazy."

"Taken money! — how much?"

"Oh, nothing to you — not quite a thousand dollars. I lost all I had saved" —

"A return for my confidence," said Prosper, harshly. "What do you expect me to do?"

"Send me to jail — I don't care. I needed money, so I tried to make some" —

"Speculating?"

Hugh nodded. "I took it little by little — to put up, you know. I thought I could make it good."

Prosper showed more annoyance than anger.

"Well, sit down and tell me all about it," he said; "but make your story short, for I have an engagement this afternoon."

He dropped down on a chair, but Hugh remained standing while he told the story as briefly as he could. It was the same old story, such as crops out in the newspapers every now and then, and Prosper listened to it with an air of weariness.

"My advice to you is," he said, when Hugh stopped, "to quit this town and make a start over again."

"That 's easy," said Hugh, bitterly. "The story will follow me wherever I go."

"Oh, I doubt that. Of course your books must be looked over — I 'll get in an expert — but you need n't think I am going to bother you."

Hugh tried to thank him, but he could not utter a word of gratitude, although he was surprised at the way Prosper took the story; it was as though he had expected it. The pause grew long and intolerable.

"Well," said Hugh, at last, "it 's all out. I suppose I can go."

Prosper glanced at his watch, hardly seeing the hands; he was thinking of Pauline Valrey, not of

his lawyer, with whom he had an engagement that afternoon. What would she do, now that her lover was disgraced? He pitied the man before him, and he could not bear to look again at Hugh's white face.

"I am sorry, Langmuir," he said, "but there is nothing to be done. To punish you would not bring back the money, even if you had taken twenty times a thousand dollars. These things are best hushed up. Of course the men in the office will know, or suspect at any rate, but it can be kept quiet. Perhaps you had better go."

"If you want me," said Hugh, "you can find me. Any way, I have told you." He drew a deep sigh. "I'd like to pay the money back," he added. "I was crazy when I took it." He laid his hand on the door-knob, and then turned and looked Prosper full in the face. "Good-by," he said.

His tone startled Prosper. "Don't lose your head, Langmuir," he exclaimed. "Don't"—

He was speaking to the empty air, for Hugh had passed out of the office. He took his hat and coat and went into the street, making his way homeward, mechanically, and let himself into the house with his latch-key. No one saw or heard him, and he stole softly up to his room. He felt such great relief, now that the worst was over, that he was conscious of a sensation akin to happiness. He sat down by the table and wrote a letter to Pauline, telling her the whole story in as

few words as he could, and then he stopped to think. At last he simply signed his name to the confession, addressed the letter, and carried it out to the letter-box on the corner. He saw the postman coming up the street, saw him unlock the box and slip his letter along with the rest into the bag. She would get it that evening. He smiled. He believed that she would cling to him in spite of everything. Slowly, he walked back to the house, past it, on towards the East River, strolling about aimlessly until twilight. Mrs. Terry heard him come in and she met him in the hall.

"Hugh," she said, "do you know this is Pauline's birthday?"

"Why, I had forgotten it; but she is coming here, is n't she? Mr. Kane told me. Oh, it was a secret — I was to be surprised. Well, no matter. I 'll make believe be surprised."

Mrs. Terry thrust a note into his hand. "Read it," she said; and he read it. "You see what she says," cried Mrs. Terry, in anger; "and she promised she 'd be here, and I went and made a cake, and got candles to stick around it; the more fool me! I might have known she did n't care anything about us. She 's deceiving you and me and everybody."

"She promised to be here?" he said.

"Yes; and she was so pleased, and you was n't to know; and there Mr. Kane has gone and got some flowers for her — Oh, I could shake her, Hugh."

He fingered the note irresolutely. "I guess I 'll go and see why she has n't come."

"Stop and eat your dinner first," said Mrs. Terry. "It 's all ready. And anyhow, what 's the use of finding out why she did n't come? She ain't here, and here 's her note, and that 's all there is about it. You sit down and eat your dinner."

By way of reply, he put on his hat again and sallied forth into the street. On the corner he hailed a car and rode as far as Fifth Avenue, where he alighted and walked rapidly to Miss Berryan's house. It was then past seven o'clock. The butler did not come to the door as usual, but a fresh, wholesome, middle-aged woman opened it, who smiled on Hugh benevolently.

"The ladies is out, sir," she said. "Mr. Prosper asked 'em to dine with him. Now, Jennie, don't you stand there in the draught, you with the cold you 've got."

"Good evening, Mr. Langmuir," said Jennie. "Cousin Jane and Mademoiselle Valrey went with Cousin Gilbert. He invited them last night. And they are going to Delmonico's, and then to the Academy."

"Oh, thank you," said Hugh. "Invited them last night," he repeated, half to himself.

"Yes," chimed in Jennie. "They talked about it at breakfast, and I wish I could go, and have lots of flowers to wear."

The rosy-cheeked Irishwoman laughed. "It

'ud be hardly worth your while to come in and wait, sir, but if you'd like to leave any message or write a note" —

"Oh no, no — it is of no consequence. Say I called, please. Good-night — good-night, Jennie."

The child had come nearer and nearer, and she held out her hand to him shyly.

"Good-night, Mr. Langmuir," she said, indicating plainly that he might kiss her if he liked, but he did not notice her upturned cheek. He ran down the long flight of steps and strode up the Avenue blindly. He turned when he had reached the entrance to the Park, and walked back. It seemed to him as though he had done nothing but walk, walk, walk all that day, and yet he did not feel tired. He talked softly to himself.

"She is deceiving me — she wishes she were rid of me. Well, now she has a good reason to throw me over — a good reason. I ought to be in jail to-night, and I should be if Prosper did n't hate to hurt her feelings. That's why he took it so calmly. He knew she would rather not have me locked up. Oh yes, yes, I see through it. And she will think he is generous — she" — He had forgotten where he was; his voice had grown louder, and now he began to shake his head and gesticulate, but he stopped short when two elderly gentlemen, whom he passed, shrank away from him. He could not help laughing.

"Don't be scared," he called out to them, where-

upon one of the elderly gentlemen broke into a run. Hugh laughed again. "What am I doing? Where am I going?" he whispered.

At Delmonico's some carriages were drawn up by the curb, and he saw Pauline step into one. It turned and rolled away, and he followed it as fast as he could, although it was soon lost to his sight in the throng of equipages; but he knew where she was going, and he hurried after her. He bought a ticket and went into the Academy, standing up at the back and scanning the faces of the audience until he saw hers. She seemed miles away, there in that box, and it was all he could do not to call her name, to cry out to her to leave those people and come to him. Once he thought she saw him.

"Pauline," he exclaimed, starting forward. An usher tapped him on the shoulder, a dapper little man in rusty black, and with a limp, white cravat.

"You 'd better get out before you are turned out," he said.

"Oh, I 'll go," said Hugh, humbly, conscious that the by-standers were eying him curiously, and he slunk out of the house, back to the street, and began to walk towards Mrs. Terry's. He was so tired that he plodded along desperately, dragging one weary foot after the other. He had eaten little or nothing that day, and a faint, sick, dizzy sensation crept over him. Under a lamp post he stopped and looked at his watch, but the hands wavered so before his eyes that he could not

make out the time. The street he was in was narrow and badly paved, and he stumbled once and fell. A policeman helped him to his feet.

"Are you sick," he asked, ironically.

"Yes, I guess so. I am trying to get home."

"Where do you live?"

"Harloe Row — not far from here. Let go of me."

The policeman relaxed his hold.

"Well, take care of yourself," he said; but he sauntered slowly along after Hugh, who reeled like a drunken man from side to side. As he crossed First Avenue, a huge van full of beer kegs bore down on him swiftly, while a butcher's wagon came up in the other direction. The Avenue at that part slopes to the south, and the great gray horses attached to the van were on a smart trot. Hugh saw them; he stopped, and shut his eyes. The driver shouted to him, but he did not stir, and then the heavy pole struck him, and he fell on the pavement between the horses' feet.

XXVII.

MR. KANE ran up the steps of Miss Berryan's house just as Pauline came to the end of Hugh's letter, and while she was mechanically folding it to slip it back into the envelope, he rang the door-bell sharply.

"Oh, he is dead, he is dead!" she cried. Prosper caught her hand, but she broke away from him, and it was she who opened the door.

"Hugh has been hurt," said Mr. Kane. "Can you come to him?"

He stared at Pauline. He had expected to rouse a sleeping household, and the sight of her in her pretty dress, with a cloak over her arm, amazed and bewildered him.

"I can't stop," he went on, hurriedly. "I am on my way for a surgeon. There is a doctor with him now. I 'll come back for you."

Pauline caught the distracted little man by the shoulder.

"What did he do?" she asked.

"Do? oh, he was knocked down by a wagon — he" — she let him go then.

"Make haste," she said, imperiously, but as she spoke, she breathed freer. It was not what she had thought — had feared.

Prosper stepped forward. "You need not come back for Miss Valrey," he called out to Mr. Kane, who had run down the steps. "I will see that she gets to Mrs. Terry's."

He picked up his hat and led her to the waiting carriage. She gave the directions to the coachman while Prosper slipped a bill into his hand.

"Drive fast," he said. Then he helped her in, took his place beside her, and the horses sprang forward, as the whip whistled over their heads. For a while neither he nor she spoke.

"Keep up your courage," he said. She made no response, and he leaned towards her. "I know all about it," he added. "I know what was in the letter. You are a brave woman." He tried to take her hand, but she snatched it away in a fury.

"Don't touch me," she cried. "Don't speak to me. I have done this — I have killed him."

She shrank back in the corner, trembling from head to foot. "Oh, I am to blame for it all," she moaned. "My Hugh — my poor Hugh! It was n't he who took the money — it was I — I." She lowered the window. "Drive faster," she called to the coachman, who was urging his horses. "And now he has killed himself — I have killed him. And you," she added, turning to Prosper, who saw her face as the light from a street lamp flashed into the carriage, "you are to blame, too."

"Hush," he said, sternly. "You don't know what you are saying. I was anything but harsh

with him. I could have sent him to jail on his own confession" —

"If you had!" she broke in.

"But I was sorry for him — I am now, the miserable, foolish boy. And he has not tried to kill himself" — he had drawn so near her that he felt her shudder. "Come, Pauline, I am his friend as well as yours."

"His friend as well as mine!" she said in scorn. "Do you think we are blind, Hugh and I? Oh, no; he knew, and I knew. You had no right to treat me so — I hate you for it. What, do you suppose I did not understand?"

"It was your happiness that I" — he began in a husky voice, but she interrupted him.

"My happiness? my treachery, my wickedness. See what you have done — think of it."

"I swear" —

"Oh, swear what you like. I saw through all your plans, but I pretended I did not. I was like wax in your hands, you thought. And Hugh saw, too, and he tried to save me. The very servants knew; Jennie knew — Oh, shame on me — shame on us both!"

The carriage rolled swiftly eastward, and drew up at Mrs. Terry's door. There were lights in all the windows, and shadows passed on the white shades. Pauline hardly knew whether to ring or not, but Mrs. Terry had heard the carriage stop, and opened the door.

"No, he ain't dead," she said, in reply to Paul-

line's unasked question. "He was knocked down by a wagon right here in First Avenue, and a policeman knew where he belonged and brought him home. You can't see him; he ain't stirred or spoken yet."

"What doctor has he?" said Prosper.

"Doctor Beauvais — you know, Pauline, — M'seer's friend, but he sent Mr. Kane to get another — Doctor Chapman."

Prosper nodded. "There 's no better surgeon in town."

After a little pause, Pauline, who was drawing off her long gloves slowly, said, —

"And do they think there is any hope? You 'd better tell me the truth."

"Doctor Beauvais don't know. He ain't had time to say much to me."

They were standing in the hall, and Pauline looked longingly up the stairs, only to see Mrs. Fisher leaning over the banister railing, staring at the little group below. The brassy-voiced clock in the dining-room whirred and beat out twelve strokes, whereupon Prosper took his watch, and carefully set the hands forward. Even in her excitement and anxiety, Mrs. Terry noticed Pauline's dress and Prosper's evening clothes, and she guessed that there had been some sort of festivity that night for the folks in the Fifth Avenue house. "You might as well come in the parlor and sit down," she said. "There ain't anything to do but wait."

Prosper was about to follow Pauline, but she turned on him.

"Why should you wait?" she said, and he quailed under her fierce eyes.

"I 'll leave the carriage," he stammered. "If you want to send for anything, it would be convenient. And I 'd rather stay, if you will let me."

She made no answer, and he remained in the hall a little while, then stole out, gave the coachman an order to stand where he was until he was dismissed, and on foot, Gilbert Prosper returned to his sister's house.

Early the next morning Miss Berryan went to Mrs. Terry's, and burst out crying as soon as she saw Pauline, who still wore her evening finery. She had not gone to bed, although the doctors had not allowed her to enter the room where Hugh lay.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," sobbed Miss Berryan. "What did happen to poor Mr. Langmuir? Gilbert did n't tell me anything, except that he had been hurt; and when you and he went off in the carriage last night, I was frightened almost to death; and I have n't slept a wink, and I know you have n't, but I 've brought you your things, and some clothes, and you take 'em right off and go to bed; and if there 's anything you want, why send" —

"Send me all I have," said Pauline. "I shall never go back to your house."

Miss Berryan wrung her hands in despair, but

Pauline did not stay long, listening to her incoherent words, for she was waiting for the doctors to come out of Hugh's room, and she hastened upstairs, leaving the spinster to sit in the parlor or go home, as she pleased. The doctors could say little; they did not think Hugh was in any immediate danger, but what they feared was some internal injury. The old Frenchman, who had known Monsieur Valrey, patted Pauline's hand and spoke to her as though she were a child.

"He is bruised and sore," he said, "and we can't examine him yet. And he seems to be in a stupor, though he answers me when I ask him a question. I am afraid it will be a long time before he gets over the shock, but we 'll take good care of him, and there will be a nurse here by noon. I wish we had him in a hospital," the doctor added, discontentedly.

"May I see him?" said Pauline.

"If you like, but you must not try to talk to him."

She went into his room, stooped over the bed, and kissed his white lips. He opened his eyes, and looked her full in the face.

"Do you know me?" she whispered. The doctor, who stood in the doorway, frowned and beckoned to her, but she waited for Hugh to speak or at least smile. He looked at her steadily, yet without apparent recognition, and her face grew as white as his, but she dared not stay, and the doctor reproached her gently for her disobedience.

"Oh," she said, looking at him piteously, "you forget that I have no one but him. You are going to save him? I have something to say to him. At least you won't let him die so" — she glanced fearfully towards the door. "I have something to say to him," she repeated.

"He will hear you, by and by," the doctor said. "Go lie down for a while."

"There 's no place for me," she returned, looking wistfully about the hall. The room that had once been hers was hers no longer, and she felt lonesome and homesick. Down below a door slammed, and Master Fisher stamped up the stairs, whistling laboriously.

"*Ma foi.* I 'll throttle him," cried the doctor, in a rage.

"Oh no," said Pauline. "Let him alone; he has a right here." She advanced to the urchin, and laid her hands on his shoulders. "Won't you try to remember that you must keep quiet?" she said gently, but in a tone so grave and entreating that he was awed.

"Yes," he answered. "Ma told me — I forgot."

Mrs. Fisher came out of her room then. "I 'm going to send him over to his grandmother's till Mr. Langmuir gets well, and you can have his room, Miss Valrey."

She spoke as tenderly as she could, and Pauline broke down at last.

"You all are sure he is going to die," she moaned. The doctor put his arm around her,

and stared about like one distracted, his face lighting up at the sight of Mrs. Terry.

"Is there no place where this girl can lie down?" he said. "She can't stand this; she must have some sleep."

"There 's only my room, but she 's welcome to it," Mrs. Terry answered. "I tried to make her go to bed last night. Come, Pauline."

Pauline let herself be led away, and the doctor gave her an anodyne that put her into a deep sleep. It was late in the afternoon when she awoke, but she did not stir; she lay gazing up at the dead white ceiling, wondering what had become of the delicate tracery of vines and flowers. Suddenly she remembered that she was not in Miss Berryan's house; the events of the night rushed over her, and she sprang up and dressed hastily, tossing aside the gown she had donned for the theatre, and hurrying herself into the one that Miss Berryan had brought. Softly she went upstairs. At the top, she met a stranger, a young man, who wore gray clothes and whose face was shaved clean.

"I have been sent here to take care of Mr. Langmuir," he said.

She brushed past him. "I will take care of him," she cried, but she dared not enter Hugh's room; she sat down on a chair outside his door, and waited and listened.

The next morning the doctor ordered her to go out for a walk. "If you behave well," he said,

"you can see him when you come back, but there must be no talking, no crying."

"Will he live?" she asked.

"I am convinced," said the doctor, evasively, "that it is n't merely the accident that we must think of. He fell between the horses, and neither they nor the wheels touched him. He has no strength, apparently."

"Oh, he has been worked and worried to death, doctor."

He nodded. "Yes, and that 's the worst of it. Broken bones are mended" — he stopped, shocked by the look on the girl's face.

"Let me go in and speak to him," she said, earnestly; "just for a minute."

"Not now. You must get the fresh air first, and if you come back with a little color in your cheeks, perhaps the sight of you will do him more good than doctors or surgeons."

She had to obey him, but although she went out, she only walked up and down the street for an half hour. When she reëntered the house, the doctor was about to leave, and he smiled on her ruefully.

"Back already? Well, go and sit by him if you like, but don't talk to him or let him try to talk to you. Not that there is much danger of his talking," he added.

She flew up-stairs, tearing off her hat and jacket on the way, and pausing in the hall to calm herself before she went into Hugh's room. He

paid no attention to her; it was nothing to him who was beside him. He lay like one dead, except that he sighed now and then, or moaned softly. Once his lips moved, and leaning nearer, she heard him mutter something about money, and he seemed to think that he was talking to his mother.

The next morning early, as she was about to enter his room again, the nurse stopped her.

"He is asleep," he said. "I have been up all night, and I 'll take a nap now if you will watch him; but don't wake him, and call me if you want me."

Mrs. Terry had put a cot in the hall, curtaining off a corner so that the nurse had a tiny nook to himself, and after giving Pauline a few directions he left her in charge. Hugh slept until the doctors came, but on their entrance, he opened his eyes, and recognizing Doctor Beauvais, smiled a little. The doctors did not stay long, and Pauline went back to her place at his bedside, where she remained until noon, giving him his medicine, or a sip of water; but although he was awake, he had no smile for her.

"You go out for a walk," Mrs. Terry said to her, after they had eaten a hasty luncheon. "I 'll sit by him for a while. It 'ud be a shame to wake up the nurse yet."

"Yes," said Pauline, "and I want to go out. I have an errand down town."

She went first to Miss Berryan's, and proceeded

directly to the room that had once been hers. The spinster accompanied her.

"I have had your things packed," she said, "and I 'll send your trunk over this afternoon, though I hate to do it, Pauline; and I really wish you would come back as soon as poor Mr. Langmuir gets better" —

"He will never be better," said Pauline, and as she spoke, she unlocked the pretty ebony writing table, and began to take out the letters and papers.

"Oh, you need n't do that," said Miss Berryan. "I meant you to keep the table. I will send that, too."

Pauline shook her head. "You have given me too much already."

She emptied the contents of the drawers into her trunk, except three business-like little books, which she slipped into a small leather satchel that Mrs. Terry had lent her. She locked her trunk and made a survey of the room.

"And now, dear Miss Berryan, good-by," she said. They kissed each other, and both had tears in their eyes. "You have been very kind — I shall never forget," she murmured. "And I want to bid Jennie good-by."

"But you 'll come and see me," said Miss Berryan. "You are not going away anywhere?"

"I don't know what I am going to do," Pauline answered.

After she had said good-by to Jennie, she bade

farewell to the servants, even descending to the cook in the kitchen, and then she left the house, not glancing back to wave an adieu to Miss Berryan and Jennie, who stood in the drawing-room window, watching her. She went to the banks where her money was deposited. Her father had put his small earnings into three different banks, in accordance with the advice of some friend or other, and Pauline drew four hundred dollars out of each. She clung to the satchel with a desperate grip as she wended her way along the crowded business streets, and she stopped twice to be directed to the office of the Essex Manufacturing Company. Prosper had just returned from a late luncheon when she entered. He showed her into his private room and begged her to be seated.

"I have only come to pay back the money," she said, and she counted out the bills carefully, and handed them to him.

"No, no," he exclaimed, "I cannot take it."

She laid the money on his desk. "But you must," and with that she turned towards the door. "Perhaps," she added, "you had better give me a receipt to show Hugh."

It was terrible for Prosper to sit down and make out that receipt, but he did it, his hand shaking so that his signature looked like an old man's.

"Is he better?" he asked.

"No." She took the bit of paper he held out to her. "Thank you. I won't keep you any longer. Good-by."

He went as far as the street with her, but she gave him no chance to say a word, and he stood and looked after her until she disappeared in the hurrying crowd.

"Well, well, well. So it ends," he muttered. He went back to his own room, and locked the door.

XXVIII.

It was not until the fourth day after he had been hurt that Hugh spoke, except to say yes or no to the questions the doctors put. They were puzzled; they feared some brain trouble, and to Pauline's anxious inquiries they could give no satisfactory answers. She stayed beside Hugh, but he did not seem to recognize her; for the most he lay with his eyes closed, opening them whenever a sudden sound in the house or street broke the silence. It was about noon of the fourth day that he suddenly spoke to her.

"Pauline?" he said, so naturally that she was startled.

"Yes," she answered, trying to control her voice.

"Give me some water, please." She slipped her right arm under his shoulders, and raised him a little, while with her left hand she held the glass to his mouth.

"Thank you," he said. He tried to turn himself, and the effort made him wince. "I *am* hurt," he added.

With the strength that comes when it is most needed, she changed his position somewhat, and he smiled gratefully.

"That 's better. I am stiff and sore."

"You must not talk," she said.

"Oh, I will. I have been thinking so long without saying anything. Has anybody written to my mother?"

"I did; I was careful not to frighten her. She sent me a telegram, and I am to telegraph her if you" —

"If I die," he said, when she hesitated. "Oh, I have heard the doctors talking, but I 'm not going to die, worse luck."

"Hush; you must keep quiet, Hugh."

"I have been keeping quiet. Sometimes, I thought I was dying; I felt myself slipping away, but I always came back again. I can't die — they won't let me. Why should they try to keep me alive?"

"For my sake," she whispered.

"Oh, what difference will it make to you? You are going away."

"I 'll never leave you, if you will let me stay with you."

He said no more then, but he smiled on her. That evening, when she went to his room again, he said, —

"You 'd better write to my mother often."

"I write every day."

"Oh, that 's good. Thank you. I will go to sleep now."

After that he seemed to get stronger rapidly, and at the end of a week the doctors told Pauline

that he was out of danger; all he needed was nursing. Emboldened by this, she ventured to show him the receipt Prosper had given her.

"I paid the money," she said. "It was I who took it — not you."

"You paid it!"

"Yes, Hugh. I was to blame for it all."

"And does any one know?"

"No one even suspects."

He drew a deep breath of relief. "But I meant to kill myself," he said. "I saw that wagon coming, and I thought it must crush me to death."

"I knew it — I was sure of it," she whispered. "Don't talk about it — don't think of it."

"Oh, I must think, and I feel easier to speak out to you. And now what?"

"Now, you are going to get well, and we will begin over."

"I have n't a penny."

"No matter. I have some money, and by the time that is gone, you will be yourself again. It will all come right, Hugh."

"What 's done can't be undone," he said, with a groan. "But, Pauline, I am glad you paid back what I stole. I would rather owe it to you."

"Owe it to me? Oh, Hugh, if I live to be an old woman, I never can make up for all the trouble I have brought upon you."

"What 's done can't be undone," he repeated. "It would have been better if I had died."

"Then I should have had to die, too. What

would there be for me to live for? Your death would have been on my head." She shuddered. "I made up my mind," she added. "I was only waiting for you."

He clasped her hand without a word, and she knelt down and laid her head by his on the pillow.

"I did n't know what I was doing," she went on in a whisper. "It was pleasant there at Miss Berryan's, and I like pleasant things, and I did n't see where I was going — I just let myself drift. Oh no, it was worse than that. I deceived you, Hugh, deceived everybody. What made me? You will never quite trust me again."

"But do you think you can ever trust me again?" he said. "I am a man — a poor, weak one, indeed; but still it was for me to stand up like a man and act bravely. Instead, I went under. I have lost faith in myself."

"But I have not lost faith in you. And you can't get rid of me, Hugh." She nestled closer to him. "If you try to send me away, I will follow you. I won't let you out of my sight. I wrote your mother we were to be married soon, so that I could take care of you better, and you can't stop me, Hugh, you need n't try. Perhaps you hate me now, but you will have to love me a little by and by — I will make you."

"Hush, you foolish girl," he said. "I love the ground you walk on."

"But I was n't true to you," she went on; "I was" — she hid her face in the pillow.

"I know," he said, gently, "and I can't blame you. You were made for a soft place in the world — made for everything that is bright and beautiful."

"There could not be anything bright and beautiful, unless I shared it with you," she broke in, impetuously. "I ought not to talk so," she added. "I only excite you."

She rose from her knees and brushed back her hair carefully, but when she glanced at him and saw a touch of color in his face, a glad look in his eyes, she knew that her words had done him good, not harm.

It was a month before he was able to go out, and then he could walk only a little way, but he got back his strength so fast that he chafed under his enforced idleness. He meant to go home as soon as the doctors would let him, and before he went, Pauline insisted that they should be married.

"I have some money left," she said, "and we can live. And I can't let you go without me, Hugh."

He yielded to her wishes, although he kept telling her that she had no business to marry a man who did not know how he was to earn a dollar.

"Perhaps my cousin will let me have his paper mill," he said. "Still, I 'll have to tell him first why I had to leave New York."

"I 'll tell him," said Pauline.

He smiled. "Well, he is a soft-hearted old

fellow — Oh, why did I ever do such a thing? How could I?"

It was not often that he reproached himself in her presence, for she could only say that she, not he, was to blame for everything. They tried each to cheer the other, but the shadows hung over them and weighed them down. Their faces showed what they had gone through, and often when they were alone they sat, hand in hand, silent, not daring to speak out the bitter regrets that filled both their hearts. It was not enough that Pauline had given Prosper the money Hugh had taken, for the shame of the theft remained. No sophistry could do away with the fact of his dishonesty, and no promises that Pauline might make could do away with the fact of her disloyalty in the past. They thought of these things, not of what the future might bring in the way of happiness.

"I wonder," said Pauline, "if I could get any pupils up there in the country. I must do something to keep me busy. And then there is your mother for us to help."

Hugh noticed the "us;" his burdens were hers.

"There is always a French teacher there," he answered, "and country people care as much about educating their children as city people."

"And any way," she added, "when a woman has determined to be a help" —

"Don't say a help," he broke in. "I could do

nothing without you — with you, I believe I can manage to get along." He smiled wistfully. They had been out for a walk and were almost at Mrs. Terry's door. "Do you realize," he said, suddenly, "that I have not money enough to buy our tickets home — hardly enough to pay a parson for marrying us?"

"No matter," she said. "We won't try to be wise and prudent any longer."

He mounted the steps slowly.

"Yes," he said, "we must keep together, come what may."

They looked at each other as they stood there. It was here that they had first come face to face; here that they had first exchanged a glance and smile. It seemed so long ago; they had grown so old and careworn since. Then, the future had held forth promises, and now, those promises had changed to regrets. They went into the house, up the stairs, and in the dusky hall where they had so often paused for a fond good-night, Hugh took her hand in both of his.

"Shall it be to-morrow?" he said. She put her arms around his neck and laid her face on his breast.

"Yes, but it might have been so different but for me."

She clung to him, sobbing as though her heart would break, and he could not comfort her. At last she went into his room and packed his trunk with desperate energy, while he wrote a despatch

to his mother, telling her that he and his wife would be at home the next night.

"We shall have to be married very early," he said, "for the train goes at ten o'clock. It is an all-day's journey."

She was on her knees before his trunk, and she looked up with a droll smile.

"Where are we to find a parson?" she said; and then he laughed.

"There is one just round the corner," he answered. "I don't know him, except by name, but I'll send him a note. And, Pauline"—

"Yes?"

He hesitated, and a painful blush overspread his white face. "Have you the money to get us home?"

She nodded, and he drew a fresh sheet of paper towards him and wrote a note, asking the clergyman to come to Mrs. Terry's house the next morning at half-past eight, to marry a couple.

"He will have hardly had his breakfast," he said, laughing again, nervously.

Pauline delivered the note and sent the despatch, and when she returned to the house, she told Mrs. Terry that there was to be a wedding on the morrow at half-past eight in the morning.

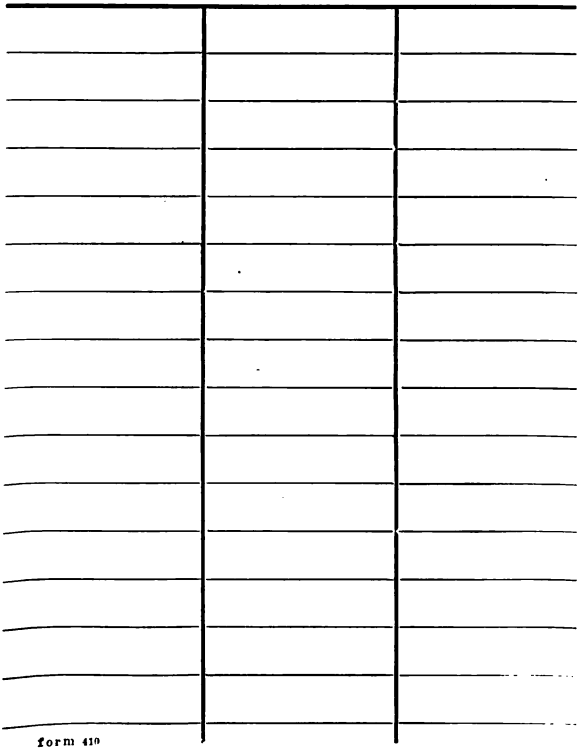
"Half-past eight!" she exclaimed; "why, I never heard of such a thing. And there 's no cake, — no nothing."

"We don't want any cakes," said Pauline, superbly. It was her duty to inform Miss Berryan

of the marriage, and she sent her a note that night. The clergyman came the next morning at the appointed hour, and he married Hugh and Pauline in the parlor, while Mrs. Terry wept in a corner, and the astonished servant girl stood in the door-way holding a damp dish-cloth. Mr. Kane gave the bride away, and kissed her awkwardly after the ceremony, and Hugh slipped almost the last dollar he had in the world into the clergyman's hand, who did not seem to know exactly what to do with it, or whether he was expected to stay or go. The expressman had already taken the trunks to the station; there was no carriage waiting outside, and after the last farewells had been spoken, Hugh drew his wife's hand through his arm, and they walked away slowly.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building



form 410